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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8356th meeting
Tuesday, 18 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cohen	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 4 June to 1 September 2018) (S/2018/831)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 4 June to 1 September 2018) (S/2018/831)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan; His Excellency Mr. Ismail Wais, Intergovernmental Authority on Development Special Envoy for South Sudan; and Ms. Grace John, Governance and Peace Manager for Community Empowerment for Progress Organization.

Mr. Wais and Ms. John are joining today's meeting via video tele-conference from Addis Ababa and Kampala, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/831, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan, covering the period from 4 June to 1 September 2018.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan and the ongoing peace process since the publication of the Secretary-General's 90-day progress report (S/2018/831), on 11 September.

As the Council is aware, there have been several developments, most important the signing, on 12 September, of a revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The revitalized peace Agreement is the result of recent intensive engagement by leaders of the immediate region, supported by the international community, to bring about an inclusive and comprehensive resolution to the crisis in the country.

I commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), supported by the African Union (AU) and its international partners, for its sustained efforts to restore peace in South Sudan. The unity of purpose demonstrated by that collective group is indeed what contributed to that progress, including by impressing upon the parties that a military solution will not deliver sustainable peace. While Special Representative Haysom and Special Envoy Wais will provide a detailed assessment of the revitalized Agreement, let me just say that its signing is an important milestone in a crisis that is now entering its fifth year.

Much like the 2015 Agreement, the revitalized Agreement, by and large, provides a road map for peace through reform, political transformation, security, social and economic development and national reconciliation. All the ingredients for success are present. However, there are legitimate questions and concerns about the commitment of the parties, and many practical aspects related to the implementation of the Agreement still require clarification. Despite those concerns, the need for peace in South Sudan is so urgent that we must seize this opportunity and work together to make the Agreement a basis for lasting peace.

Moving forward, the onus of ensuring the implementation of the Agreement will, of course, be on the parties. It will be crucial for the parties, notably the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, to build trust and muster the political will to work together to ensure a more protective environment that will allow all South Sudanese stakeholders, including women, to meaningfully engage in the full implementation of the Agreement. A full and immediate cessation of hostilities is an imperative first step.

In that regard, it is of great concern that, within days of the signing of the Agreement, there have been reports of fighting in Central Equatoria and Unity states. In particular, on 16 September in Central Equatoria, heavy clashes are said to have taken place in Jamula Centre and Mbudu in Kopera county. Hostilities were also reported in Kendiri and Mangalatore in Kajo-Kaji, on 13 September. Reports indicate that those hostilities

are in response to alleged Government attempts to install local authorities in opposition-controlled areas. Both sides appear to have mobilized reinforcements to support those operations to secure territory.

On 15 September, small-scale clashes were also reported around Nying, in Guit county in Unity state, between Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition forces and Taban Deng Gai-aligned forces. Those incidents are reportedly associated with a push by Taban Deng to consolidate influence in his stronghold of Guit county. We remain concerned about the potential for further clashes where Government and opposition forces are in close proximity, particularly in parts of Central and Western Equatoria, Unity and Western Bahr el-Ghazal. In advance of the integration of Taban Deng's forces into the SPLA, we also understand that there is a scramble to assemble fighters, including children, while we have yet to confirm any disengagement of forces, in accordance with the timelines of the revised Agreement.

The continued fighting has worsened the already dire humanitarian and human rights situation in the country. Five years on, approximately 1.8 million persons are displaced within South Sudan, another 2.5 million are living in neighbouring countries. Extreme violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, threats and harassment experienced by civilians continues to be a key hallmark of the conflict. We must therefore send a strong message to the parties that, with the conclusion of the revitalized political Agreement, there is no justification for the continuation of violence, which continues to exact a heavy toll on the civilian population. We must once more call upon them to demonstrate leadership by taking the necessary steps to silence the guns, disengage forces, facilitate the free and unhindered movement of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian partners and reverse the massive humanitarian and human toll of the conflict.

With regard to taking measures to address the human rights and protection situation in the country, I wish to note the recent finding of a military court that 10 soldiers were guilty of committing violence against civilians at the Terrain Hotel in Juba, in July 2016. That verdict is a first step towards delivering justice to the victims of this war and curbing the culture of impunity.

Let me end by reiterating that the signing of the revitalized Agreement offers an opportunity for South Sudan to turn a new page. Recognizing that the road ahead will be difficult, I cannot emphasize enough the critical role that IGAD must continue to play at this critical juncture in the search for peace in South Sudan. IGAD must continue to bring its influence to bear on the parties to the conflict to meet their obligations under the Agreement, including by ensuring that those responsible for violating the Agreement are promptly identified and held to account.

For our part, the United Nations stands ready to assist South Sudan to achieve the goals of the Agreement. UNMISS will continue to perform the tasks required by its current mandate, with the required emphasis on the protection of civilians, which remains a priority for the Mission. The Regional Protection Force, an integral part of UNMISS, will also continue to play its role, according to its existing mandate. Should the Security Council deem it necessary and appropriate to amend the terms of the UNMISS mandate, we stand ready to support accordingly.

Several considerations of principle and practicality, however, must continue to guide these deliberations, including: first, the need for the protection of civilians to remain a key priority within the broader framework of the four pillars of the UNMISS mandate; secondly, the requirement to preserve a single, unified force, including a unified command and control structure, to ensure the continued effectiveness of the peacekeeping operation; and, finally, while UNMISS can contribute to a secure environment conducive to progress in implementing the Agreement, any further role in support of the envisioned security arrangements must be consistent with the principles of United Nations peacekeeping, as well as the standards to which we hold all troop- and police-contributing countries. At the same time, we must ensure that any further tasks are subject to the clear and detailed agreement of the parties to the conflict, as well as the United Nations. That will ensure that each task can be effectively carried out.

Finally, we look forward to working with the Council, IGAD, the AU Peace and Security Council, the parties and all stakeholders to support the Agreement.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict

in the Republic of South Sudan, which was signed by a broad spectrum of political parties on 12 September in Addis Ababa.

When I took up my present assignment, two years ago, South Sudan was attempting to implement the Agreement. As I prepare to leave, in two weeks' time, South Sudan is preparing to implement a revitalized version of that same Agreement, but only after an intervening two years of civil war and devastating conflict. The important question that faces us is how the international community and, notably, the United Nations should assess, support or otherwise respond to this important development.

At the outset, we need to acknowledge the achievement of the Republic of Sudan, supported by Uganda, in mediating the Agreement. Through the Agreement the gap has narrowed among the parties on a number of governance and security issues that had previously seemed unbridgeable. Their combined leverage, the presence of a hitherto absent protagonist — Mr. Riek Machar — and energetic diplomacy resulted in a signed agreement that contemplates a pre-transition period of eight months and a comprehensive transitional road map of three years. There are nonetheless a number of gaps, issues whose finalization remains unfinished and other reasons to assert that the process will need the continuing attention of the region and the international community.

Before dealing with those, let me emphasize that in our approach we recognize that we should not make the perfect the enemy of the good. We recognize that, even where the Agreement can be considered flawed, it could still be an effective platform for peace if the parties demonstrate the political will to implement it, deal collaboratively with the need to face down its challenges and avoid the impulse to seek political, tribal or regional advantage. In that regard, I have advised the parties that the support of the international community for the Agreement will follow an assessment of its sustainability, and not simply the signatures to the text. That now raises the question as to what sustainability might mean with regard to the newly finalized text. Fundamentally, our concerns relate to the following six issues.

First, notwithstanding the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) facilitation team, we note that there are still a few, but potentially significant, parties that continue to express reservations about the text. In addition, there are some substantive governance issues that the text contemplates will be resolved in due course. One such issue relates to the number of sub-national states. That issue concerns the very geography of the tribal authority and control. The other issue concerns the way in which the South Sudanese will make their national constitution — their new, embracing social contract. Those issues are indeed central, but not insurmountable if approached in a spirit of inclusivity. That goes beyond a number count of parties signing the Agreement, with a real effort needed to ensure that no group or significant community is left behind.

We have also alerted the parties of the need to address the enforceability of the Agreement. We have already noted the numerous cessation-of-hostility agreements that have been violated within hours of the parties recommitting to peace. No agreement can last in the face of continuing violations for which there is no penalty or consequence. That risks a response by the South Sudanese as to what is different in this Agreement from the previous failed agreements. In our view, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism for investigating, monitoring and reporting violations is not the problem. It is what happens to those reports that constitutes 80 per cent of the system of accountability. If nothing happens to the reports, the system simply does not work. In that regard, we believe that the region must demonstrate a commitment to make the Agreement effective, including by confronting spoilers, even if those spoilers include the Government of South Sudan.

With regard to the parties' responsibilities, we have pointed out that the first step is to demonstrate their political intent by making the guns fall silent — immediately and everywhere. Without such a sign, the international community will be reluctant to provide financial support.

That brings me to the third requirement for sustainability, namely, financial resources, not least to provide for the immediate cantonment of the various forces. From my engagement with significant potential donors, they have shown no or little appetite to fund the process unless there is a clear provision to ensure transparency and propriety in financial transactions, including accountability for past misappropriation of public funds.

The very low levels of trust among the parties constitute one of the hurdles facing the implementation of the Agreement. The prevalent spirit of rivalry will be imported into the Government by virtue of the fact that the parties and their leaders will likely be competing candidates at the elections, which will be the culmination of the transition. The Council should urge the parties to undertake confidence-building measures to build faith in the peace process and ameliorate the bitterness and hostility, which is the legacy of the past four years of horrible intercommunal violence. Such measures do not require financial resources.

Finally, detailed security arrangements and a mutual meeting of the minds on such arrangements are critical. In that regard, the parties may have a different understanding on how the unification of forces will take place. With regard to cantonment sites, there is no agreement on where such sites will be, how many will be established, who will be eligible or who will be responsible for sustaining them. That is despite the fact that today marks D-day plus six; cantonment is contemplated to be completed by D-day plus 30. In addition, there is no treatment, as of yet, of the security gap or who will fill it when the men under arms are cantoned.

Until the very last moment there was little or no mention of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the fate of its mandate or changes to it in the documents produced during the negotiations. Over the past few days, a proposal to have the Sudan and Uganda fill that gap transformed into a proposal for Uganda, the Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia to be incorporated into the UNMISS Regional Protection Force. What arises from that is the need, referred to in the latest IGAD summit communiqué and underscored by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, for IGAD to engage with the Council. Only the Council can determine the size and composition of United Nation peacekeeping forces. Such engagement would allow the Council to engage on the security architecture, including the provision of specialist, very important person protection personnel, as well as the geography of disengagement and separation, which would provide a more conducive environment for a peacekeeping intervention.

Those issues do not prevent the revitalized Agreement from being welcomed as a real step forward. They can be resolved if the parties share and show a real commitment to bring peace to South Sudan. On that, the jury is still out. What is clear is that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, will need to keep South Sudan and the implementation of its latest peace Agreement under close watch.

The President: I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wais.

Mr. Wais: I very much welcome the opportunity to address the Security Council today on the successful recent conclusion of the High-level Revitalization Forum on the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

Almost one and a half years ago, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Assembly of Heads of State and Government mandated the High-level Revitalization Forum of the South Sudanese parties and stakeholders to discuss concrete measures for achieving a permanent ceasefire and the full and inclusive implementation of the Agreement, as well as to develop a revised and realistic timeline and implementation schedule towards democratic elections at the end of the transition period. The Assembly further mandated the IGAD Council of Ministers to convene and facilitate that process and instructed the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the IGAD secretariat and my Office to support the Council of Ministers. I am happy to inform the Council today that IGAD member States, together with the support of Council members and the international community, have successfully completed that noble process, with all the South Sudanese parties and stakeholders signing the revitalized Agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to very briefly highlight our achievements and outcomes to the Council. I will highlight some key progress made following the decision of the IGAD Assembly at its thirty-second extraordinary session, held in Addis Ababa on 12 June, during which the Assembly, inter alia, mandated His Excellency President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir to facilitate the second round of face-to-face discussions between President Salva Kiir and Mr. Riek Machar to discuss and resolve the outstanding issues on governance and security arrangements, including measures proposed in the revised bridging proposal of the IGAD Council of Ministers.

In accordance with the decision of the Assembly, the Khartoum round of talks was launched on 25 June as a continuation of the two phases of the High-level Revitalization Forum and the face-to-face talks held in

Addis Ababa. The Khartoum talks followed the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, on 21 December 2017, and the initialling of several agreed governance and security issues here in Addis Ababa. The Khartoum talks, including a round of face-to-face meetings held in Entebbe, Uganda, quickly produced results, including an agreement between the two principals, namely, President Kiir and former Vice-President Machar, to work together to end the conflict.

Prior to the current revitalized Agreement, the South Sudanese parties and stakeholders concluded the following agreements: first, the Khartoum declaration of agreement among the parties of the conflict of South Sudan, signed on 27 June; secondly, the agreement on the outstanding transitional security arrangements, signed on 6 July; thirdly, the agreement on outstanding governance issues for the transitional period, signed on 25 July; and, lastly, the agreement on outstanding issues of governance, signed on 5 August.

I am pleased to inform the Council that most contentious issues were amicably resolved, and the parties signed the revitalized Agreement on 12 September. The signing ceremony was witnessed by IGAD Heads of State and Government. The signing of the July text of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is a milestone and marks the end of formal negotiations at the High-level Revitalization Forum. However, the task ahead of implementing the Agreement requires us all to join hands and mobilize the requisite resources — both political and financial — to make peace sustainable and rejuvenate the rebuilding of the new South Sudan. The signing of the revitalized Agreement was followed by the development of a comprehensive implementation matrix, initialled on 2 September. A permanent transitional security arrangement workshop was convened from 3 to 5 September, the outcome of which the parties initialled.

The High-level Revitalization Forum was all-inclusive process that enabled all parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including estranged groups and other South Sudanese stakeholders, faith-based groups, South Sudanese refugees, civil society organizations and women and youth, to participate.

Allow me now briefly to update the Council on some of the IGAD Assembly decisions. The Assembly decided that, until his final status is determined at the upcoming Ordinary Summit of the IGAD Assembly, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition Mr. Machar Teny, shall be allowed to stay in a country of his choice in the region. The Assembly also resolved that IGAD shall engage the Security Council to ensure that the Regional Protection Force (RPF) is fully deployed to execute its mandate in accordance with resolutions 2304 (2016) and 2406 (2018), and shall request a further review of its mandate to allow the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia, as guarantors, to contribute forces to enhance protection and security throughout the implementation of the revitalized Agreement. The Assembly further mandated the IGAD Chiefs of Staff to assess the operational needs and elaborate the necessary tasks of the RPF in the light of the current situation on the ground, and the prospected expansion, as a basis for a securing endorsement from the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council.

As I conclude, allow me to congratulate all the South Sudanese parties on this historic occasion. The determination and resilience has paid off. I thank the Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers, Council members, the high-level facilitators, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism and members of the task force for the enormous support to the process, without which we would not have come this far. My special thanks also go to the Government of the Sudan, which hosted the process for the past three months. The Government spared no time, effort or resources to lead the process to success. The role of His Excellency Mr. Eldirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, was outstanding. I wholeheartedly thank the African Union Commission, the United Nations, the European Union, the troika on South Sudan, China, Japan and members of the IGAD Partners Forum for their contribution to the process.

Finally, I want again to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council. I look forward to closely working with you in implementing the revitalized Agreement. Security challenges, the dark humanitarian situation in and the rebuilding of South Sudan requires our collective action.

The President: I thank Mr. Wais for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. John.

Ms. John: I would like to thank the United States presidency for this opportunity to speak to the Security Council today on behalf of the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization. I also speak on behalf of the South Sudan Civil Society Forum, a coalition of over 200 groups working to promote peace, freedom and respect for human dignity.

On 12 September, the people of South Sudan welcomed the news that the Government and opposition groups had signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. After close to five years of war, we desperately cling to the hope that the commitment of the parties is genuine and that they will implement the Agreement in a timely manner.

We know that whatever peace the Agreement brings about will be very fragile. On 14 September, the ceasefire monitoring body announced that it would conduct investigations into an alleged breach of the agreement in the Yei area. On 15 September, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) announced that a peacekeeper had been shot by a Government soldier in the same area. Those are worrying signs. The Security Council must continue to insist on respect for the ceasefire.

Our peace is fragile because some opposition groups declined to sign the Peace Agreement, and others were not party to the negotiations. The Security Council should call for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to support continued outreach to, and engagement with, those groups, so that they also join hands to support the Peace Agreement. Even among the parties that did sign, there must be continued efforts to build trust and confidence among them\ and to ensure that they can effectively work together in the same Government, towards a common goal.

This peace is fragile because there is complete impunity within my country. Violations of human rights and humanitarian law rarely result in criminal prosecution. We believe that there must be some effective and reliable deterrent to prevent rampant rape, extrajudicial killings and obstruction of humanitarian access, which have become all too normal in South Sudan. We urge the Security Council to insist on the immediate establishment of a hybrid court for South Sudan and to support efforts to strengthen the national criminal justice system.

Competition over resources and cattle raiding regularly trigger local violence in South Sudan. The divisions among ethnic communities have grown so deep that it is sometimes difficult for us to coexist with each other. My organization is supporting communities to engage in dialogue and resolve differences without violence. We urge the Security Council to call for increased support to local peace initiatives and for the timely establishment of the commission for truth, reconciliation and healing that is provided for in the Peace Agreement.

The South Sudanese people are concerned about reports that Ugandan and Sudanese forces entered the country over the past month. While Presidents Museveni and Al-Bashir played a role in helping parties reach the revitalized Agreement, we are concerned that the presence of their forces could have negative security implications, since they are not yet under a United Nations mandate. The Council must urge South Sudan's neighbours to respect the Security Council arms embargo and insist that any forces entering under the pretext of the Peace Agreement come only as part of the Security Council-mandated peacekeeping mission.

We urge the Security Council to help ensure that our peace does not fall apart. Peace requires that we South Sudanese be honest with ourselves. We must be free to openly deliberate and debate the governance challenges we face, including corruption and impunity. The Peace Agreement provides specific roles for civil society and women and youth representatives in many of the bodies it sets up. They will join bodies tasked with planning security-sector reforms, monitoring the ceasefire, ensuring reconstruction in conflict-affected areas and providing reparations to those most affected by violence. But, in a context where critical voices are silent, where peace, human rights and political activists — such as Dong Samuel Luak, Aggrey Idri, Peter Biar Ajak, Bashir Ahmed and many others — are disappeared or arbitrarily detained, no one will be free to contribute effectively to those bodies or to speak up when the Agreement is not being implemented. I ask the Council to please continue its calls for respect for the freedom of expression and for the release of those who are arbitrarily detained.

South Sudanese women participated in the negotiation of the revitalized Agreement, and one of their major achievements is the increase of required women's participation in Government from 25 per cent to 35 per cent. That is something to celebrate, but it

is also a call to action: to ensure that it is effectively implemented and that women are able to participate equally in decision-making. The Security Council should call for all parties to uphold their commitment to women's full and meaningful participation in the Peace Agreement. The implementation and monitoring of the South Sudan national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) can also contribute towards achieving that goal.

We urge the Security Council to pressure the parties to the Agreement to honour the ceasefire and implement it in a timely manner; ensure that humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian workers remain a top priority; accelerate efforts to ensure transitional justice in South Sudan; call on the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to formally launch the implementation plan for the signed joint communiqué of October 2014 on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence; remain committed to the protection of civic space and the freedom of expression; ensure that any involvement by the Sudan and Uganda in South Sudan's internal security is supported by the United Nations; call for UNMISS to prioritize issues related to accountability in all support to the military and security forces, including in reform efforts; and call for support from the international community in facilitating the reconciliation process among the political elites in South Sudan.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to continue engaging with civil society in country-specific briefings, in particular concerning Syria, Burundi, Yemen, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as in its future discussions on South Sudan.

The President: I thank Ms. John for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States of America.

We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his update on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as to thank to him and Mr. Wais for the discussion of political dynamics and developments in South Sudan. We are thankful to be able to take advantage of Special Envoy Haysom's knowledge with only a few days left in his assignment, and we thank him for being here. We sincerely appreciate that Ms. Grace John joined us at such a late hour, as her perspective helps us understand the situation on the ground in South Sudan and is critical to our discussion here today.

The United States continues to support the people of South Sudan and their aspirations for freedom, peace and prosperity. We welcome the commitment of the region to come together to address common peace and security priorities for the benefit of its citizens. We want to see that commitment translated into lasting peace for the people of South Sudan.

The United States acknowledges the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, but past failures make us concerned about the sustainability of the Agreement — for example, how should we interpret the fact that military offensives have been undertaken in violation of numerous ceasefire agreements, even during recent negotiations? How can we reconcile continued blockages to humanitarian access and the killing of 13 humanitarian workers since January? How can we explain the ongoing detention of political prisoners, including Peter Biar Ajak? There has to be a radical change in the behaviour of South Sudan's leaders and a demonstrated commitment to peace, inclusivity, financial accountability and good governance before we, as the Security Council, should welcome any agreement. Otherwise, we are turning a blind eye to past failures.

The implementation of the latest Agreement must begin with the greatest confidence-building measure of all — an end to fighting. It must be broadly inclusive of ordinary people across South Sudan: civil society, religious communities, ethnic minorities and other groups. The Kiir Government needs to ensure greater and more representative power-sharing. There must be meaningful checks on executive and majority power.

The United States supports the continued engagement of the region to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement and acknowledges the role of the Sudan and Ethiopia in hosting recent negotiations. We urge the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member States and the African Union (AU) to intensify their involvement in monitoring progress on implementation and to hold the parties to account. Violations of the Agreement should be highlighted, and those responsible need to face consequences.

The United States calls on all nations to implement the United Nations arms embargo that the Security Council adopted just over two months ago. We must continue to demonstrate that we will take action against individuals or entities who threaten the peace, security

or stability of South Sudan, if these agreements are to have any chance of successful implementation.

The United States will also prepare sanctions on additional individuals or entities who engage in corrupt activity. We call on regional leaders and financial institutions to ensure the proceeds from corrupt activity do not flow through their jurisdictions and to freeze assets connected to illicit transactions. There must also be accountability for the crimes of recent years. The establishment and activation of the AU hybrid court for South Sudan is long past due. That is an urgent priority. We call our AU partners to make the court a reality, as called for in the latest Agreement.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan has played, and will continue to play, a vital role in keeping the peace in South Sudan. In this fragile and uncertain transition to peace, it is important that the UNMISS mandate continue to focus on the protection of civilians, while properly configuring the Mission to address evolving risks and realities on the ground.

The United States notes with deep appreciation and deep concern the dire conflict-induced humanitarian situation in South Sudan. An estimated 7 million people currently require humanitarian assistance, and over 4 million of them are children.

For the third year running, South Sudan remains one of the most dangerous environments — if not the most dangerous environment — for aid workers in the world. We need urgent actions to address the egregious access denials, rent-seeking impediments by the Government and the violence that endangers humanitarians. Refugees and internally displaced persons must not be forced to return if they feel unsafe. The end of fighting must not mean a call for forced repatriation.

Above all, we support the aspirations of the people of South Sudan to lead lives unburdened by fear and to experience peace, pluralism and prosperity. In a recent interview, the Archbishop of South Sudan, Justin Badi Arama, put it best: "peace is not something on paper; peace is something which is deeper". It is now time for the leaders of South Sudan to demonstrate that their commitments on paper can lead to a genuine peace and a prosperous future for the people of South Sudan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their respective briefings. As this is likely to be the last time that Mr. Haysom briefs the Security Council in his current capacity, let me express our appreciation to him for all his dedicated efforts as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan and South Sudan. We congratulate him on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and we look forward to continue working with him in his new capacity.

We are pleased to have Special Envoy Ambassador Wais via video tele-conference from Addis Ababa. His briefing on developments regarding the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-led (IGAD) South Sudanese peace process is, as always, exceptionally valuable. We in the region are indeed very grateful to him and his team for their efforts during this difficult peace process. They greatly facilitated the successful completion of the High-level Revitalization Forum.

I also thank Grace John for her remarks, and welcome Ambassador Malwal of South Sudan to the United Nations today.

We are now presented with a historic opportunity to end the cycle of vicious violence in South Sudan and bring about tangible results for the people of South Sudan, who have suffered for far too long. The South Sudanese parties should be commended for demonstrating the necessary flexibility in order to sign the final revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, done at Addis Ababa in the presence of IGAD Heads of State and Government. Efforts by the countries of the region in helping the parties bridge their differences should also be recognized. They really worked in unison to ensure the successful completion of the IGAD High-level Revitalization Forum.

What makes this final revised Agreement unique is that, unlike its predecessor, all the parties signed it without trying to add any reservations. Furthermore, the peace process was conducted in an all-inclusive and transparent manner. All political organizations, including estranged groups, were fully involved in the consultations and negotiations. Civil society organizations, faith leaders, women's and youth groups and eminent persons all participated actively. We hope

that will provide a firm and realistic foundation for the full implementation of the Agreement.

We are of course aware of the divisions within the ranks of the South Sudan Opposition Alliance over the Peace Agreement. However, most of the member groups of that umbrella organization signed the Peace Agreement. We are optimistic that the holdout groups will decide to embrace the Agreement and continue to play a positive role in ensuring that South Sudan remains on a positive trajectory.

We know very well that a difficult task lies ahead. The full implementation of the revised Peace Agreement must now be our priority, and that demands the concerted efforts of all. We must ensure the full and continued commitment of all parties; they are the first and foremost guarantors of the implementation of the Agreement. Given the actions by some parties in the past, we can understand why members of the Council have concerns about this. However, that cannot be an excuse to ignore the significance of the revised Peace agreement for peace and security — not only in terms of its impact on South Sudan but on the whole region. The parties themselves are aware of those concerns. We believe they will do their utmost to demonstrate their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the revised Peace Agreement.

Throughout the long-drawn-out High-level Revitalization Forum process, the support and assistance of the African Union (AU), the United Nations, IGAD partners and the wider international community were indispensable. It is critically important that that support now be extended during the implementation phase. Maintaining unity of purpose among IGAD, the AU and the United Nations in the search for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan is necessary today more than ever.

We believe that the Security Council has a particular role to play in ensuring the implementation of the revised Peace Agreement. The IGAD Summit requested the support of the Council in ensuring the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force and a further review of its mandate so that it will be in a better position to support the implementation of the revised Peace Agreement. We hope the Council will respond positively to that request. We will work closely with the penholder and members of the Council to look for the appropriate way to accommodate the request of the IGAD Summit.

Humanitarian and economic conditions in South Sudan remain dire. Therefore, we must remain concerned about the fragile security situation. The immediate cessation of all hostilities is absolutely necessary to deal with such challenges. Last week, the IGAD Summit called upon the Government and opposition groups to prioritize the implementation of the permanent ceasefire on the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. The restoration of a permanent ceasefire is essential for unhindered access to the affected population and for the safety of humanitarian personnel and assistance delivery.

The continuous support of the international community is also critical. It has done a great deal, but the 50 per cent funding gap to the humanitarian response plan for South Sudan means that the collective ability of humanitarian actors to meet people's needs is seriously constrained. We would hope that the international community will step up its efforts in providing the much-needed humanitarian assistance to the affected population of South Sudan.

Let me repeat that we now have a real prospect for responding effectively to provide solutions to the problems in South Sudan. Now is the time to act. We cannot afford to lose this opportunity.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me express our thanks to Mr. Lacroix, Mr. Haysom, Mr. Wais and Ms. John for their informative briefings.

I would like to take a moment to thank Nicholas Haysom for his service as Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan and congratulate him on his new position as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with him.

Today's briefing on South Sudan comes at a decisive time in the country's history, as its leaders signed a new Peace Agreement last week. As leaders in South Sudan show their willingness for a renewed commitment to peace in South Sudan, it is imperative that the Council remain engaged. We must continue to ensure that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) can support the people of South Sudan in achieving sustainable peace. In that context, I will focus on three issues: the political process, accountability and UNMISS.

First, with regard to the importance of an inclusive and genuine political process, we express appreciation to all of the parties involved in the signing of the Peace Agreement on 12 September. Let me especially thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. This is another chance at peace for South Sudan, and we call upon all signatories to ensure that the Agreement is respected and implemented. President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar have a great and grave responsibility. It is imperative that the peace process be inclusive. We must not be naive — reaching an agreement on power-sharing and security will not automatically lead to sustainable peace. Building and sustaining peace in South Sudan will require addressing the root causes of the conflict and the commitment and inclusion of all actors.

Let me also stress the important role that the region plays in ensuring a political process with concrete results. Following unrelenting violence in South Sudan, the Security Council imposed targeted sanctions and an arms embargo in July of this year. Such measures must be implemented and adhered to, especially by the region. We consider the action taken on the ground to be tentative steps in the right direction. For such steps to endure, we must continue the targeted sanctions and arms embargo, as they are crucial for ensuring peace in South Sudan. The steps are indicative of the Council's resolve to end the violence and protect civilians.

Secondly, concerning the need to ensure the accountability of all actors in the conflict, we would like to express our appreciation to the Government of South Sudan for convicting 10 military officials for the murders and rapes committed at the Terrain Hotel in Juba. The Government of South Sudan must build upon that important first step to ensuring accountability. Once again, the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/831) paints a horrifying picture. Sexual violence in South Sudan is brutal, widespread and systematic. It is despicable. We call upon the South Sudanese Government to investigate all crimes. All perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice, in particular those responsible for the despicable acts of sexual violence against women and girls. Impunity must end. Accountability is key for building sustainable peace. We firmly believe that the hybrid court for South Sudan is a key instrument in ensuring accountability for perpetrators. We call upon the Government of South Sudan to sign the memorandum of understanding with the African Union to finally establish that necessary court.

Thirdly, with regard to the role of UNMISS, in order to adequately protect civilians, UNMISS and other United Nations staff and humanitarian workers must have unrestricted access to all parts of South Sudan. Freedom of movement for both UNMISS and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism is absolutely imperative. The maintenance and implementation of the Monitoring Mechanism is crucial, especially following the signing of the new Peace Agreement. The Council must strongly condemn all violations of the status-of-forces agreement and ensure that they are adequately addressed. On that note, we condemn the recent attacks against peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. There have been two incidents, which resulted in either the death or serious injury of peacekeepers. On 26 June, a Bangladeshi Blue Helmet lost his life. On 15 September, three days after the signing of the Peace Agreement, a Nepalese Blue Helmet was injured. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those peacekeepers. The attacks must end. Furthermore, we are increasingly concerned about rising tensions in protection-of-civilian camps. We encourage the voluntary return of internally displaced persons from protection-of-civilian sites. We believe that UNMISS should develop plans and strategies to ensure that the Mission is able to protect civilians at protection-of-civilian camps. It must do so in close coordination with other humanitarian actors. The protection of civilians is one of the most important tasks in the UNMISS mandate.

In conclusion, we are committed to building sustainable peace in South Sudan. We look forward to continuing to support the South Sudanese people in building a more hopeful future for themselves — one in which they are not plagued by the scourge of war and hunger, but, rather, can live together in peace.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking our briefers.

The signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of 2015 is encouraging, a [illegible] on behalf of France. I also commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and [illegible] of the region, as well as its Special [illegible], who contributed to the finalization of the revitalized Agreement. France will continue to support the efforts of all partners. Such efforts must be inclusive in order to find a solution to the crisis and end the violence. We hope that the Agreement will enable us to move

towards lasting peace in South Sudan. It is our hope and that of millions of South Sudanese who long for peace and a better life.

Ms. Grace John, from whom we have just heard, is the face of a fledgling South Sudanese civil society that wishes to start a new chapter. But we know that hopes have already been dashed several times in South Sudan, and we must therefore collectively be vigilant and determined. We must be vigilant, first of all, because it is on the actions taken that we will judge the progress made. The Agreement reached must be effectively implemented on the ground. No one — neither the South Sudanese nor the international community — wants peace on paper alone. We will therefore be vigilant in ensuring compliance with the ceasefire and in protecting civilians, which is at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix has just reminded us, and is at the heart of the Security Council's concerns. As Special Envoy Haysom has just pointed out, it will also be necessary to specify the mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the commitments made.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/831) refers to the progress on the ground in recent months. But that progress is still far too modest. Several violent and deadly incidents have occurred. And, as early as Friday, a few hours after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the ceasefire was violated in the Central Equatoria region. The next day, Saturday, 15 September, an UNMISS soldier was wounded by a soldier of the South Sudanese Army in the town of Yei, which is an unacceptable attack for which those responsible will have to face justice. In that context, I would like to express France's solidarity with UNMISS personnel.

France will equally be, and we must all be, extremely vigilant about humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian workers who go to the aid of populations to the point of risking their lives. France's unwavering commitment on that subject is well known.

The humanitarian challenge is huge. Indeed, on this point, the report of the Secretary-General is edifying: 1.8 million displaced persons, 2.5 million refugees in neighbouring countries, 60 per cent of the population in a situation of severe food insecurity and 2.4 million children unable to go to school. Behind the litany of numbers, an entire generation is being sacrificed. Dangerous intercommunity tensions are also being rekindled by poverty. In addition to this tragic humanitarian situation, there have been serious human rights violations, some of which may constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. That is a cause of major concern for France. It is high time that the hybrid court be established and made operational.

In addition to the necessary vigilance, we must also demonstrate determination and perseverance. We must collectively respond to humanitarian challenges. We must also stand firm with regard to those who bear responsibility for this situation, which is the meaning of the sanctions adopted by the Council. And we are determined to continue along this path as long as necessary.

The Council can therefore count on France's determination. It is the same determination that leads us to give our full support to the Secretary-General's recommendations to alleviate the suffering of the people, silence the weapons and move forward towards peace.

In conclusion, I would like to warmly thank Special Envoy Haysom for his outstanding work over the past two years and wish him every success in his new responsibilities as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Allow me to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy Ismail Wais and Ms. Grace John, for their informative and thought-provoking briefings.

Poland welcomes the recent positive developments in the peace process and the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. We commend the regional efforts that led to the Agreement, in particular the role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Ethiopia and the Sudan. Nevertheless we are cautiously optimistic. We have seen South Sudanese parties sign many agreements only to violate them later. We truly believe this time all signatories will demonstrate real commitment and determination to bring durable peace and stability to South Sudan.

Unfortunately, despite those positive developments, the Agreement seems yet to have an impact on the situation of the people of South Sudan. The security, humanitarian and economic situations remain dire. Targeted attacks on civilians, including women and

children, continue. Serious human rights violations and abuses and violations of humanitarian law persist, and their perpetrators enjoy impunity. Millions of South Sudanese are displaced, and more than half of the population is suffering food insecurity. It all has to come to an end. There is no doubt that the people of South Sudan critically need stability and State institutions that care for citizens and provide basic services. It is high time the political leaders of South Sudan put aside their differences and put the people of South Sudan first.

In that context, I would like to stress the importance of political inclusiveness and ensuring women's and young people's participation in political and peace processes in South Sudan. It is our strong belief that South Sudanese women can play a vital role in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, as well as in forging resilience.

I would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for its tireless efforts in extremely difficult circumstances. We praise the Mission's role in the protection of civilians and in ensuring an environment conducive for humanitarian actors to deliver their assistance. We pay tribute to its members who have paid the highest price during their service in South Sudan.

We condemn in the strongest terms the attacks on UNMISS forces and reiterate that such crimes must not go unpunished. We also remind the Government of South Sudan of all its obligations under the status-of-forces agreement.

Let me conclude by thanking Special Envoy Haysom for his hard work, tireless efforts and commitment to supporting the peace process in South Sudan. We congratulate him on his new appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and wish him every success in his new endeavour.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Special Envoy Haysom and Special Envoy Wais for their comprehensive updates on the latest developments in South Sudan. We also commend Grace John, civil society representative, for her valuable insights.

My country welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/831) and would like concentrate on three key issues, as follows.

First of all, our delegation would like to congratulate the people and the Government of South Sudan for finalizing the revitalized Peace Agreement on 12 September. We highly commend the concerted work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and the United Nations, as well as the mediation efforts of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia, and of Presidents Omar Al-Bashir of the Sudan and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, which helped to secure the peace deal. The Agreement has become a great example of the cherished notion of African solutions for African problems.

Secondly, we hope that this historic Agreement, signed after five years of fighting, will lay the foundation for durable peace and stability in the country and finally end the suffering of the South Sudanese people. To achieve that, the Security Council needs to remain united in support of IGAD, the African Union and the parties in South Sudan in implementing the provisions of the Agreement. The international community should make every effort to build trust and confidence among the parties and provide adequate and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and economic development. For their part, the South Sudanese parties need to demonstrate genuine political will in order to implement the Agreement, stop the ongoing violence by bringing their forces under control and strictly comply with international humanitarian law. Civil society, especially women and youth groups, also have an important role in assisting with intercommunal reconciliation and confidence-building among local populations.

Thirdly, we strongly condemn the recent attack on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Yei and call on the Government to investigate the attack and hold the perpetrators accountable. Accordingly, we support the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 programme, as underlined today by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom. We also endorse the recommendation of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom to undertake confidence-building measures. We thank him for his exemplary work and cordially congratulate him on his new appointment. We wish him all the best and look forward to dialogue and trust being restored throughout the Horn of Africa region, which will have been made possible by his noble and tireless efforts.

In conclusion, we would like to thank UNMISS for implementing its mandated tasks under very difficult circumstances, and commend Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Shearer and Special Envoys Haysom and Wais, as well as civil society and international, regional and subregional organizations and other stakeholders, for their tireless efforts and commitment to seeking a solution to the crisis in the country.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Sudan and South Sudan, the Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the representative of the Organization for Community Empowerment for Progress in South Sudan for their valuable briefings.

I would like to address four aspects of the topic we are discussing today: the political developments, the humanitarian situation, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and the security situation.

First, with regard to the political developments, the Security Council is meeting today after the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and after tireless efforts by members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and international partners to revitalize the Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. We express our appreciation to the signatories of the Agreement and hope that the non-signatories will join the peace process soon. We also express our appreciation for the constructive participation of the Government of South Sudan in the peace process.

We would also like to welcome the role of the Republic of the Sudan in supporting the negotiations. In that regard, we refer to the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States adopted at its hundred and fiftieth session, at which the significant role of the Sudan was appreciated in hosting and facilitating the peace negotiations in South Sudan.

We would like as well to express our appreciation for the significant role of IGAD members in pursuing and promoting peace. We look forward to the result of the revitalized Agreement in resolving the conflict in South Sudan so as to turn a new page based on reconciliation, justice, reconstruction and development.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, the continued displacement of 1.8 million inhabitants of South Sudan and 2.5 million refugees in neighbouring countries is a great source of concern for all of us. In addition, large segments of the population suffer from food insecurity. In that regard, we recall resolution 2417 (2018), on hunger and conflict, whose paragraph 7 urges the protection of infrastructure in order to deliver humanitarian assistance, including nutrition.

Peace will be incomplete without improving the living conditions of the population. We hope that the signing of the Peace Agreement will be an opportunity to prepare areas for the refugees and displaced persons in South Sudan so as to be an integral part of the society. We express our appreciation for the role of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in securing the safety of refugees before their return, and we emphasize the need to not target humanitarian workers, while also condemning every impediment to their noble task.

Thirdly, with regard to the Mission's mandate, UNMISS should continue its work without obstructions while respecting the laws and charters that govern its operation. We welcome the military court's verdict against the perpetrators of the Terrain Hotel incident. We look forward to accountability being applied to all criminals. We also recall the attack suffered by the Mission while escorting a humanitarian convoy in Central Equatoria state. We welcome the news of the arrest of the person responsible for that disgraceful act.

We thank the Mission and express our appreciation for its work through the implementation of its mandate in line with resolution 2406 (2018), including simple matters that the Mission has implemented, such as presenting gifts to Al-Sabah Hospital and Juba Teaching Hospital.

Fourthly, with regard to the security situation, we are concerned by the violations of the Ceasefire Agreement and the reciprocal accusations, in particular in Central Equatoria state, despite the progress achieved in the peace process. We would also like to applaud the operation of the Ceasefire and Transition Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism and the transparency with which it publishes its reports. We thank His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae for his effective and active role in chairing the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. We look forward to continued unity among the Security Council, IGAD

and the international community in order to support and protect the work of the Joint Committee and the Monitoring Mechanism.

Finally, we thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his efforts as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and we wish him every success in his new position as Representative of the Secretary-General in Somalia.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the important briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Mr. Ismail Wais and Ms. Grace John.

Peru welcomes the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. We would like to highlight the good offices deployed for that purpose by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Governments of the subregion.

However, we must recall the repeated violations of the Ceasefire Agreement and other commitments undertaken by the parties, which clearly have undermined their credibility. South Sudan is the most violent country in terms of providing humanitarian assistance, despite the status-of-forces agreement signed by the Government in connection with the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).

We would like to stress the importance of the South Sudanese parties remaining committed to the implementation of the new Peace Agreement. The people of the country and the international community need to see a substantive change in their actions in order to be able to support sustainable peace.

In that regard, we express our regret with regard to the high number of fatalities caused by clashes between communities. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNMISS have documented the magnitude of forced displacements, attacks against civilians and the particular vulnerability of women and children. Against that background, we would like to highlight the important initiatives involving traditional leaders that have been promoted by UNMISS in order to promote social cohesion, dialogue and reconciliation, as well as the efforts of UNMISS to protect civilians, especially the most vulnerable.

We underscore the need for the Government of South Sudan to develop capacities to investigate, prosecute and punish serious allegations of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, including sexual violence and the recruitment of children for conflict.

The parties' commitment to building sustainable peace must also lead to strengthening the cooperation and national capacities required to meet the urgent needs of the people and to promote the sustainable development of the country, in particular in the areas of health care, nutrition and education. To that end, we believe that the recent visit of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the emphasis placed on the participation of women in the political life of the country are important, as is the need to take specific measures to address sexual and gender-based violence. The withdrawal of armed and security forces who are alleged perpetrators of crimes is one of the recommendations put forward by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, which will be important to consider for the purposes of preventing and punishing conflict-related sexual violence.

We also believe that it is necessary that the Council remain united in its support for the South Sudanese peace process and maintain close coordination with the African Union and IGAD. We hope that the recent Peace Agreement and the winds of change in the Horn of Africa subregion will be the start of a new era for the people of South Sudan.

In conclusion, we would like to make mention of the crucial role and efforts of Mr. Nicholas Haysom as Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan and wish him every success in his new and sensitive post as Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2018/831), which provides an update on developments in South Sudan and on the extent of the challenges to peace and stability faced by the country since the start of the conflict in 2013. We also thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan; Ambassador Ismail Wais, Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for South Sudan, and Ms. Grace John, Governance and Peace Manager for Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, for their excellent briefings. We congratulate

Mr. Haysom on his outstanding work as Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan and wish him every success in his new post and efforts to achieve peace in Somalia.

My delegation's remarks on the report of the Secretary-General will focus on political and security issues, the humanitarian situation, human rights and the operational environment of the United Nations Mission in Southern Sudan (UNMISS).

On the political front, like those who spoke before, my delegation welcomes the signing, on 12 September, by the parties to the conflict of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. We commend the tireless mediation efforts of the region's leaders, who made a major contribution to the signing of the Agreement. It is now up to the authorities of South Sudan to commit to its full and inclusive implementation so that the South Sudanese people can enjoy the peace and stability for which they have longed for more than five years.

Côte d'Ivoire encourages the South Sudanese parties to take full advantage of the positive regional dynamic and fully commit to working to restore peace and stability to their country, by refraining from unilateral acts that could disrupt a smooth peace process. To that end, it is essential that the authorities of South Sudan receive technical and financial support from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners. In addition, measures must be taken to restore trust among the parties and create a climate conducive to constructive dialogue, which is a prerequisite for the effective and efficient implementation of the Agreement.

On the security front, my delegation is deeply dismayed about the ongoing intercommunity conflicts and criminal acts in the country. Furthermore, continuing clashes in several parts of the country, in particular in Upper Nile, Bahr el-Ghazal and Equatoria, and their tragic consequences on the population, are also a source of concern. Given the situation, Côte d'Ivoire would like to urge the Government of South Sudan to step up efforts to protect civilians, who, under international law, are its primary responsibility. It also calls on South Sudanese parties to put the best interests of the people first and end the clashes throughout the country so that there is a chance for the Peace Agreement to be effectively implemented and for security arrangements to be operationalized, in accordance with the voluntary commitments made.

Recurring violations of international humanitarian law in South Sudan are widespread; ending them must be an absolute priority. With approximately 1.8 million internally displaced persons, 2.5 million refugees and high food insecurity risks, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains one of the most unpredictable in the world. According to the Secretary General's report, approximately 2.4 million children receive no education, which poses a threat not only for the next generation but also to the building of a viable State. In addition, deliberate challenges to humanitarian assistance are on the rise. Despite constant calls from the international community, humanitarian workers continue to work in an environment of extreme violence. Côte d'Ivoire condemns all acts of violence committed against humanitarian personnel and equipment. We call on the leaders of South Sudan to create a security environment conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their homes.

With regard to the human rights situation, my country notes with deep concern the persistence of sexual violence, violence against children and the destruction of property and people's livelihoods. It is therefore imperative to ensure the implementation of the principle of accountability, so that the perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable for their actions before the competent international courts. In that regard, my country welcomes the conviction of 10 Government soldiers for rape and other crimes against civilians. We call on political and judicial authorities to make greater efforts to establish the rule of law in South Sudan.

With regard to the operational environment, Côte d'Ivoire commends UNMISS on the work it carries out in extremely difficult conditions, marked by an increase in the number of violent acts committed against its personnel. The presence of UNMISS in South Sudan is essential for the protection of South Sudan's people and of humanitarian workers. It is therefore important that the Mission be able to operate in the right environment. My country also calls on the authorities of South Sudan to ensure strict compliance with the status-of-forces agreement and eliminate all obstacles to the implementation of the UNMISS mandate.

In conclusion, the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan heralds an improvement in the situation. The return of stability in the country will require not only the political will of the country's leaders but also the support of all international partners. Côte d'Ivoire therefore calls for concerted efforts to help restore peace and stability in South Sudan.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): May I also join others in thanking our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Lacroix; Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom, to whom we bid farewell and look forward to seeing very soon; Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for South Sudan Ismail Wais, who I know has been working on this dossier so tirelessly and for so long; and Ms. Grace Jones for the valuable human perspective she offered the Security Council.

The Peace Agreement signed last week gives us all hope, none more so than the 12 million people of South Sudan. We very much welcome the commitment shown by the region on the important issue of peace and security. We have been consistent in the Council in supporting IGAD and its work. Although the Peace Agreement signed is a significant achievement, it is the first step on a long journey. We must continue to strive for progress. The people of South Sudan will continue to suffer if peace is not achieved and sustained.

The conflict has already killed thousands and forced a third of the population to flee their homes — 2.5 million to neighbouring countries. Half of the population is food-insecure. Of the 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, more than half are children. Following years of conflict, displacement and economic collapse, those children are less likely to receive an education than any other children in the world. At times, South Sudan's leaders have seemed indifferent to the suffering of their people. It is not the result of a natural disaster or an unavoidable situation, it is man-made, and therefore the solution must also be man-made, starting with political stability. The Peace Agreement must create the conditions for a lasting end to the violence. As I said, the region played a vital role in bringing parties to the conflict together, and I commend the much-needed commitment and energy that they invested, including States around this table. Now is the time to build on that momentum. A peace agreement on its own will not deliver and sustain peace for South Sudan. We need to see the continued engagement by all parties and ensure that words are turned into meaningful and sustainable actions.

Those of us who have been saying those things have picked up some irritation and frustration at those sorts of comments. It has been said that we are not being positive enough, or that we are undermining a peace process. I believe that no one will be more positive than those of us around this table — if the process really means an end to the violence and a determination to put the needs of the people first.

Similarly, those of us around this table have a special responsibility to bring the experience and lessons that we have from other conflicts, other peace processes and indeed from our experience of the South Sudan conflict and peace process, to bear. It does not serve the parties to the Peace Agreement, or the people of South Sudan, if we do not use our experience and our knowledge from other peacebuilding situations. It is therefore vital that we adapt and use those lessons. In countries such as Libya, we have seen how political agreements can unravel and enable a relapse into violence. From our experience in Colombia, we have seen that the ongoing commitment from the parties is the key factor for the successful implementation of peace agreements. We have also seen that implementation needs support from the region and sustained, determined engagement from the Council. We need to draw from all those experiences when we consider the situation in South Sudan, as well as understanding why previous peace processes have not worked in that country, and focus all of our efforts on successful implementation.

We must ensure that the revitalized Agreement does not repeat past mistakes. The continued violence, even following the most recent ceasefire agreement, is extremely concerning. Nineteen violations were reported by the Secretary-General between June and September. The increase in humanitarian access incidents and violence against humanitarian workers are gravely concerning. Thirteen humanitarian workers have been killed in South Sudan this year alone.

In addition to that, we are deeply concerned that United Nations Mission in South Sudan peacekeepers have been repeatedly denied access to key areas to allow them to perform their mandated responsibilities. That is unacceptable, and it must end. The region and the international community must closely monitor violations and ensure that those responsible are held to

account. I very much support Ms. John in calling for the establishment of the hybrid court for South Sudan.

As the international community, we must not stand by and allow individuals to undermine peace. The targeted sanctions we imposed in July are an important tool, and are just as important now that the Agreement has been signed. They can be used to maintain pressure on all the parties to keep the promises that they have made. The arms embargo signalled that the international community will not tolerate attempts to impose military solutions. I urge the region and the wider international community to continue to support those measures.

The United Kingdom remains committed to peace in South Sudan, but in order to be convinced of the parties' commitment, we need to see significant change in the approach by the parties to the conflict. They must silence their guns, allow humanitarian workers to deliver life-saving assistance and release political prisoners. They must show a genuine commitment for the effective and accountable implementation of the Peace Agreement and must demonstrate that they are willing to work for the benefit of all South Sudanese, including through checks on executive majority power and the transparent use of resources.

Today the peace process stands at a crossroads. To overcome the challenges ahead, we need unity across the international community. We urge the region to continue to drive forward constructive progress, especially on security arrangements, in step with the United Nations and the international community. Above all, we urge the leaders of South Sudan to put aside personal interests to work together for a better future for their people.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom and Special Envoy Ismail Wais for their briefings today. Let me also extend a particular word of thanks to Ms. Grace John for her briefing. We heard her loud and clear, including her call to urgently enforce the ceasefire, put an end to impunity and ensure accountability and continue promoting women's meaningful participation. I can assure her that we will do our utmost to follow through on her calls.

I would like to start by commending the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the facilitators of the High-level Revitalization Forum process, in particular the Government of the Sudan and Special Envoy Wais. Their tireless efforts over recent months, with the backing of a coherent region, were instrumental for reaching the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. I also acknowledge the efforts of the South Sudanese for the progress made and for having demonstrated the necessary flexibility and willingness to compromise. But the Agreement is only a first step. What is now needed is a clear political will of the parties to implement what has been agreed to in an inclusive manner and to engage in genuine peacebuilding and reconciliation activities.

While we welcome reduced levels of fighting in recent weeks, we are also deeply concerned about reports of continued military operations. A complete cessation of hostilities by all parties, the Government and armed groups alike, is urgent and must be unconditional. There must be consequences for violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, as well as against those who stand in the way of the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

We encourage the region, supported by the international community, to maintain its active engagement and continue to play a proactive role. The region's involvement in monitoring the implementation of the Agreement and holding the parties to account will now be especially important. It is also vital that the Council continue to support those regional efforts, making sure that we speak with one voice.

The spirit of inclusivity, which was a crucial element of the High-level Revitalization Forum, must now be maintained in the coming implementation phase. The quest for peace will be viable only if it includes all stakeholders. We must continue to assure the effective participation of youth, women and civil society. Gender equality is central to peace and security, and we should support further efforts to increase the political representation of women.

An important aspect as we move forward will advancing accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, including by establishing the envisaged hybrid court for South Sudan without further delay. Impunity for human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, not least are acts of sexual violence targeting women and girls, cannot be accepted. The continued high level of conflict-related sexual violence, as highlighted by the Secretary-Generals report (S/2018/831), is truly

appalling. The continued monitoring and reporting of such crimes will remain important.

We also remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation, which results directly and indirectly from the conflict. The rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian relief across South Sudan must be ensured. In that context, we again commend the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for its efforts to reach areas critical to addressing protection concerns, as well as its preparedness to now support the parties in taking further steps on the path towards peace. It is worrisome that violations of the status-of-forces agreement continue. The denial of access and restrictions of movement remain unacceptable. UNMISS has to be able to carry out its mandated tasks, including to monitor and investigate the human rights situation and to protect civilians.

The millions of South Sudanese caught up in this brutal and futile war have waited for over four years for an end to the conflict and an opportunity to start rebuilding their lives and country. The Agreement reached last week provides a unique opportunity for peace, reconciliation and recovery. This is not the time for euphemisms, but we cannot afford an attitude of cynicism either. As Mr. Haysom said, we cannot allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. We must remain focused, and all parties must stay the course and seize this opportunity. The continuous efforts of IGAD and the African Union will need our full support. The current momentum must not be lost.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We wish to thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan; and Mr. Wais, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Special Envoy to South Sudan, for their respective briefings. We thank them for all the efforts made to promote peace and stability in South Sudan. Mr. Haysom has been appointed to a new post, and China commends him for all the work he has carried out in his current capacity as Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan. We also note the intervention of Ms. Grace John.

South Sudan is an important country in Africa. Maintaining peace and stability in South Sudan has a bearing on the prosperity and development of the region. Thanks to recent joint efforts by the various South Sudanese parties and regional organizations, the peace process in South Sudan has made important progress. Last week at the Extraordinary Summit of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the South Sudanese parties formally signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and its implementation documents, thereby laying an important foundation for South Sudan to end the conflict and move towards peace. We welcome that development, and we commend the steadfast efforts, mediation and good offices of such regional organizations as IGAD and the African Union, as well as of Ethiopia, the Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. We also applaud the cooperation and flexibility demonstrated by the various parties in South Sudan.

At the same time, it must be recognized that the overall situation in South Sudan remains very fragile. There is a plethora of challenges to achieving enduring peace and sustainable development. The United Nations and the international community need to continue to pay attention and provide the necessary assistance to South Sudan. It is imperative to push the various parties in South Sudan to effectively implement the series of peace agreements signed so far, ensure a comprenensive ceasefire and cessation of violence as soon as possible and restore and increase mutual trust so as to achieve lasting peace. The international community should focus on the following tasks in the next phase.

First, it should continue to fully support the good offices and efforts by regional organizations and countries. The international community should respect South Sudan's leadership in handling its domestic affairs; realize the full potential of regional organizations, such as IGAD, and countres as the main channel for mediation; support South Sudan's national dialogue process; and push the various parties in South Sudan to resolve their differences through peaceful means, such as inclusive dialogue, and to build mutual trust. As the primary institution for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should send out positive messages and play an important role in promoting the political peace process by working together.

Secondly, the international community should continue to help South Sudan maintain domestic peace and security. For a long time, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan has actively supported the implementation of peace agreements, in that way contributing positively to the maintenance of peace and

stability in South Sudan. China commends the United Nations Mission in South Sudan for its efforts and supports its continued implementation of its mandate in accordance with the Security Council resolutions. We hope the Secretariat and the Mission will continue to enhance communication with the Government of South Sudan, help to build the security capacity of the country and support South Sudan in advancing its political peace process.

Thirdly, the international community should scale up humanitarian assistance and economic support for South Sudan. The protracted conflict has caused large-scale displacement and a high number of refugees, thereby stalling economic and social development in some areas. According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/831), only 50 per cent of the funding for the humanitarian response plan for South Sudan is in place, leaving a huge gap yet to be filled. China calls upon the international community to actively support South Sudan in addressing the humanitarian difficulties and tackling both the symptoms and root causes with an integrated approach and increased investment in agriculture, energy, infrastructure, education and health care, thereby assisting South Sudan in rapidly advancing its State-building process and relaunching its economic and social development.

China has consistently attached great importance to peace and stability in Africa, and has always supported African countries in solving African problems in African ways. China will continue as always to actively support and constructively participate in the peace process in South Sudan and to play a constructive role in achieving lasting peace and sustainable development in South Sudan.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Pluinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We should like to express our gratitude for the briefings given by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre LaCroix, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Nicolas Haysom, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Special Envoy to South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais, whom we acknowledge and thank for his commitment and great work carried out during the negotiation process in South Sudan. We also thank Ms. Grace John for her briefing.

I begin by paying tribute to the fundamental role that IGAD played in establishing dialogue between the parties in South Sudan. It was a long and difficult process with several ups and downs that, thanks to the determination of the countries of the region and the will of the parties, led to the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 12 September. The Agreement was carefully prepared and represents a significant step forward that contributes to ending the conflict in that country, something that everyone in this Chamber seeks.

While we commend this moment in the political situation, the current situation in South Sudan remains one of the most critical in the world. The difficult humanitarian, economic and security situation still affects most of the South Sudanese population. The Agreement is an encouraging step forward, but it needs genuine commitment and strong political on the part of the South Sudanese leaders for its proper implementation, which can be the most difficult phase in a peace process. The ongoing collaboration of the Transitional Government and the opposition with the countries of the region and the United Nations should be further strengthened at this stage.

In that regard, it is very important that the Security Council maintain unity and work in harmony with the African Union and IGAD, among other things, mainly in restoring trust among the parties. As such, a neutral and constructive position must be maintained. For that, it is imperative to coordinate our actions with those of the region.

We urge the parties to implement expeditiously the second chapter of the Agreement, regarding the permanent ceasefire. We hope that the ongoing ceasefire and transitional security arrangements workshops can bring about short-term results and that progress can be made, among other urgent matters, on planning for the unification of the forces of South Sudan.

In relation to the humanitarian situation, we express concern for the more than 6 million people in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance, which represents more than half of the population. Likewise, the almost 4 million internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries face a lack of basic services, education and health care, as well as serious food insecurity. Unfortunately, those who suffer most from the consequences of displacement are children and women. We must pay attention to the number of children who do not receive schooling and mobilize

the international community to work with them and reclaim a generation that is growing up in precarious conditions as a result of the conflict.

Similarly, we are concerned about the high number of victims of sexual violence, which mainly affects women and girls. To that is added the fact that South Sudan remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for humanitarian workers. While we welcome the recent ruling of a national military court condemning 10 soldiers for their participation in the murder, rape, sexual harassment and armed robbery of humanitarian workers, we believe that it is necessary to step up efforts to fight impunity with greater rigour and effectiveness.

Both the Government and the opposition must ensure an optimal operating environment for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian workers, in compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service, which, together with UNMISS, works to remove and destroy explosive devices. That work will contribute to the resettlement of displaced persons, the return of displaced persons and refugees and the establishment of favourable conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we reiterate our gratitude to the countries of the region for the leadership demonstrated, which made significant progress in the political process possible. Likewise, we thank UNMISS for the work it is doing, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his important work over the past few years. We wish him the greatest success in his future role as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for the detailed information on the situation in South Sudan and the progress in the South Sudanese political settlement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Haysom for the work that he has done and congratulate him on his recent appointment. I wish him every success in his work at his new post. We also listened with interest to the briefings by Special Envoy Ismail Wais and Ms. Grace John.

The Russian Federation's consistent position arises from the premise that a sustainable ceasefire and the launch of an inclusive process of national reconciliation are the key to stabilization in South Sudan. We therefore welcome the signing of the revitalized Peace Agreement by the parties to the conflict in South Sudan on 12 September. We hope that the breakthrough nature of the agreements reached in Addis Ababa will not be questioned. We agree that they still require substantial detail, but that does not detract from their significance. It is important that the South Sudanese parties demonstrated their readiness to reach a compromise, as well as their desire to resolve their existing differences by peaceful means.

We pay tribute to the effective coordinated efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which enabled the successful completion of the South Sudanese Peace Agreement revitalization process. We note that regional actors painstakingly spent over a year bringing the positions of the parties together. It was indeed the countries of the region that were able to start the negotiation process from scratch at a time when South Sudan's leaders could not even be seated at the same negotiating table. It was IGAD that forged ahead in its efforts when many of those in this very chamber had lost hope and written off the process of revitalization.

We note the unity demonstrated by the region's leaders in their approach to the South Sudan settlement, and we call on them to maintain that approach in their continued support for the peace process. We also welcome the efforts of the guarantors to facilitate the implementation of the Peace Agreement by providing national contingents from the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia as part of the Regional Protection Force.

We see this process as a practical manifestation of the principle of African solutions to African problems, as well as an opportunity for effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Security Council and regional organizations. We are ready to consider substantive proposals by IGAD regarding the Regional Protection Force. We encourage South Sudanese politicians to show goodwill when implementing the revised Agreement.

Despite clear positive trends, we also note calls for broadening sanctions on South Sudan, including in this Chamber. I would therefore once again like to recall our position on that issue. As before, we think that excessive pressure applied through sanctions might entrench the positions of the South Sudanese parties and may give them the wrong signals. The result might be the reverse of what is desired, with the parties turning

to a military solution rather than a negotiation process. That would certainly make it more difficult to achieve a peace settlement. Finally, in principle, we do not accept a situation where attempts are made to use the sanctions regime of the Security Council as a substitute for serious political and diplomatic work.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): This afternoon's debate on the situation in South Sudan is most timely, especially after the recent developments that have taken place in the political context of this brother country. I therefore thank you, Mr. President, for including this issue on the agenda for this meeting.

As usual, the report (S/2018/831) presented by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean Pierre Lacroix — whom we sincerely thank — has been most comprehensive and illustrative regarding the current situation on the ground.

We thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative for South Sudan and Mr. Ismail Wais, Special Envoy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for South Sudan, as well as Ms. Grace John, Governance and Peace Manager for Community Empowerment, for their very informative briefings.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea would like once again to pay tribute to the hard work and efforts of IGAD, the African Union, the United Nations and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to bring the parties to the conflict closer to implementing the signed Agreement in the quest for peace and stability in South Sudan.

When it comes to this conflict, my country has always advocated that the parties must respect the ceasefire and return to the negotiating table. Today we can say, with a high degree of optimism and some satisfaction, that that objective has been met. All delegations present should congratulate themselves as, in part, this ceasefire is due to the attention given and the pressure exerted by the Security Council.

Equatorial Guinea has closely followed the high-level diplomacy that has, in recent months, facilitated the evolution of the peace process that began with the signing of an important declaration of a joint agreement. That established a permanent ceasefire and introduced commitments in some of the areas of greatest tension. We cannot help but applaud those steps, which unequivocally constitute a step in the right direction.

However, we are concerned about the latest attacks mentioned in the report presented today, which we note were caused by famine and a lack of employment and schooling. We appeal to the sense of responsibility of all parties to the conflict; we remind them of the historic moment for which they are responsible before people and the international community and we strongly condemn the attacks.

We want to remind all parties involved that, in addition to seeking peace, they have an obligation to meet the humanitarian needs of the population, which is dealing with poverty, food insecurity and a shortage of basic services. The fulfilment of that obligation will be successful only when humanitarian operations are able to take place and when threats and risks to humanitarian organizations and their courageous personnel are eliminated.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its great satisfaction at the signing of the final Peace Agreement last week in Addis Ababa by the parties involved in the South Sudan conflict, under the auspices of IGAD, the African Union and countries of the region. We offer our warmest congratulations to all, but especially to the Government of South Sudan, for this definitive Peace Agreement that broadens out a new horizon of hope for the country and its people. We may finally see lasting peace established, which should bring with it the dividends of development in all aspects.

However, that new horizon will become a reality only if all of the parties to the recently signed Agreement comply with and respect all its clauses. The commitment of the parties to the agreement is key, as is the support and due attention of the international community when it comes to the effective materialization of this significant agreement. Through it, it will be possible to effectively achieve the peace so yearned for by the people of South Sudan.

However, we would like to point out that the signing of the Agreement does not complete the work of the United Nations, or that of the regional actors, including IGAD, the African Union and neighbouring countries. The post-conflict period, which is extremely complex and requires special attention, must now be effectively managed. On the basis of what happens on the ground, UNMISS must adjust its activities, focus on

direct support for the effective implementation of the Agreement and ensure a sense of calm in the country.

We hope that, with the signing of the revitalized Agreement, a new phase will also give way to create more opportunities to provide assistance to the local population — from food assistance to the repatriation of displaced persons to their homes of origin. As the reports presented to us have pointed out, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan continues to be of great concern. The problem of famine and the issue of human rights must be addressed urgently so that they receive the priority attention they deserve.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea urges the Government of South Sudan to continue with its consistent cooperation with UNMISS, IGAD and the African Union so that together they can achieve their sole objective to achieve the peace and stability that the people of South Sudan deserve. For Equatorial Guinea, the reports on the humanitarian situation and human rights are a matter of concern. We hope that there will be improvement in that regard.

In conclusion, our Government commends the recent news of moving displaced persons from the United Nations protection sites to new locations within the community, as well as the conviction by a South Sudanese military court of 10 soldiers to serve life sentences for the commission of various atrocity crimes. We hope that the Government of South Sudan will continue to demand accountability for all those guilty of heinous crimes, not just against humanitarian personnel but also against the people of South Sudan, who so fervently hope for peace and tranquillity.

I would like to end by paying well-deserved tribute to Mr. Haysom for the successful and noble work he carried out in South Sudan, where he leaves with his head held high and duties fulfilled upon the signing of the Peace Agreement. We wish him the same success in Somalia and hope that he can contribute to the return of peace and stability in that sister nation in the Horn of Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Allow me, first, to congratulate you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Ethiopia as he begins his tenure in New York.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Special Envoy Haysom, Special Envoy Ambassador Wais and Ms. John, the latter two being in the region. We would like to thank Ambassador Wais for his patience and perseverance. He played a major role in what we are celebrating in South Sudan today. We appreciate Mr. Haysom's dedication in the service to the people of South Sudan. The revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was achieved, in large part, due to his wisdom and advice to the parties. We wish him luck in his new assignment. We are, however, pleased that he will remain in the region, and surely we will continue to see him.

On behalf of the Government of South Sudan, we would like to offer our condolences to the peace and humanitarian workers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Our prayers also go to the soldier who was injured in the attack in Yei last week. We wish him a speedy recovery.

On 12 September, South Sudanese political leaders signed the revitalized Agreement in Addis Ababa. That long-awaited Agreement was a result of the leaders of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), led by Mr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia; President Omar Al-Bashir, President of the Sudan; and President Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, who, after many futile attempts, were wise to think outside the box. For that, we are thankful and grateful to them and the region.

As the Security Council meets today to discuss issues regarding the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, there are winds of peace blowing in the region, and we are happy that South Sudan is breathing those winds of peace and hope. The people of South Sudan are excited that the Government and the opposition leaders signed the revitalized Agreement. Moreover, President Salva Kiir Mayardit's statement on 15 September, in which he pledged that the Government would implement the Agreement in good faith and appealed for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of South Sudan, was a call for the people of South Sudan to unite after years of senseless war and division.

We know that the Agreement is difficult and complicated, and the international community has voiced some concerns about it. However, it is important that those concerns should not be allowed to undermine the Agreement itself, or its implementation. Instead,

we would like to appeal to the international community to look at the signing of the Agreement as a positive turn of events. It should send signs of encouragement and support to the political leadership as it embarks on the difficult task of implementing the Peace Agreement and reuniting the communities in South Sudan. It is an achievement on which the international community should build. In the words of Mr. Haysom, we must not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good.

At this juncture, and in conclusion, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/831) and welcome his commitment to remain engaged during the coming years of implementation. We urge the Council to join the Secretary-General, the African Union and IGAD in the endeavour of making sustainable peace a reality at long last in South Sudan.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8357

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8357th meeting
Thursday, 20 September 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cohen	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Michon
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 20 August 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/778)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 20 August 2018 from the secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/778)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/778, which contains the text of a letter dated 20 August from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the continued support of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, specifically as per the Council's request to inform it on the progress made by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan towards implementing the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2412 (2018). I would also like to briefly elaborate on the Secretary-General's recommendations to reconfigure UNISFA, as submitted in his letter of 20 August (S/2018/778).

With regard to the first benchmark, which is facilitating the full freedom of movement, the Sudan and South Sudan maintained standing clearance for all UNISFA air and ground patrols within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. Since March, both countries have authorized their senior national monitors based at the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli to provide approval. Consequently, all patrols undertaken by UNISFA since April have received approval without delay.

On the second benchmark, which is finalizing the agreement on the four Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism team sites, UNISFA continues to operate a team site at Tishwin/Panakuac within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, and efforts continued within the reporting period to establish the other three team sites. The ad hoc committee for the 14 Mile Area met on 28 August, when the South Sudanese delegation stated that it was unable to convince local leaders to allow the establishment of the tweam sites in Safahah/Kiir Adem and As Sumayah/Wierayen. As a result, the committee recommended that the matter be referred to the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. With regard to the establishment of the fourth team site in the Abu Qussa/Wunkur area, the decision remains with the Joint Political and Security Mechanism to consider an alternative location due to the presence of rebel entities.

Despite the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to convene meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism within the reporting period — which is the third benchmark — the three scheduled meetings were postponed by the parties. The meeting to be held on 11 and 12 August and the subsequent meeting scheduled for 6 and 7 September were postponed to accommodate talks between the South Sudanese parties in Khartoum and subsequent consultations on the agreement reached on 30 August. The meeting scheduled for 17 and 18 September was postponed by the Sudan due to prior commitments of the Government. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel has scheduled the next meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism for 23 September.

With regard to advancing the establishment of the border-crossing corridors — which are the fourth and fifth benchmarks — progress remains contingent on parties undertaking sensitization exercises with their border communities. Sensitization efforts are necessary to allay the concerns of the border communities, while emphasizing that in no way do the marking of border-crossing corridors and Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations prejudice the current or future legal status of the border. The upcoming meeting of the Joint Political and Security

Mechanism is expected to address sensitization issues with the border communities.

Lastly, the African Union Border Programme convened the Joint Demarcation Committee — which is the sixth benchmark — from 10 to 13 September, in order to resume border demarcation discussions. However the parties were unable to advance their discussions on the boundary delimitation document, which would guide the demarcation exercise. Progress on that document stalled in 2017. The Joint Border Commission is scheduled to meet in October.

Despite only partial completion of the conditions contained in resolution 2412 (2018), the past few months witnessed a number of other positive developments in the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan, not least among them the efforts undertaken by the Sudan in facilitating talks between the South Sudanese parties in Khartoum. Building on this promising collaboration between the parties, I call on the Council to consider the reconfiguration recommendations outlined by the Secretary-General in his letter of 20 August to adjust UNISFA to the current realities so as to best support both Governments in their efforts to implement their agreements.

Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations have markedly increased and picked up momentum within the past year due to the proactive push by the Security Council and UNISFA to further activities, including the establishment of team sites. The Border Monitoring Mechanism remains a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the two countries and its normalization. It is in this regard that I request the Council to consider the recommendation in the Secretary-General's letter and allow for a modest adjustment in UNISFA's mandate on the Mechanism, within current resources. This would provide the Mission with the ability to better support border-demarcation efforts by the African Union border programme, including the much-needed sensitization of the border communities that I highlighted earlier. The recommendations envisage the establishment of two further sector headquarters and team sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, as required, to provide more comprehensive coverage of the border region. Troops would be transferred from the Abyei area to achieve full operating capability for the Border Monitoring Mechanism. This would harmonize the diminishing military threat with the corresponding reduction in military need for the Abyei area.

With regard to the Abyei area, the military component of the Mission would concentrate its deployments along the borders of the area to safeguard against armed incursions. With criminality increasing in the Abyei area, the recommendations call for the deployment of three formed police units and additional specialized individual police officers to enhance the Mission's focus on maintaining law and order and continue furthering peace between the local communities. These proposed changes are accommodated within the current uniformed personnel ceiling of 4,550. Extensive consultations were undertaken by the Secretariat with the parties and the African Union to formulate these recommendations, which endeavour to match the situation on the ground by reducing troops from the Abyei area, introducing police to manage law and order, and enhancing the Mission's mandate to seize and advance progress on the Border Monitoring Mechanism, as well as to operationally support the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in its political efforts. The further engagement of the Council with the parties is necessary to agree on a mandate for UNISFA that would serve the parties as well as their border communities.

In closing, let me reiterate that it is imperative that all peacekeeping missions address the changing needs on the ground and work towards achieving a political resolution. In the case of UNISFA, the support to the implementation of the 2012 cooperation agreements and the resolution of the status of Abyei and of the border needs to be reframed in such a way as to enable the parties to make meaningful progress. The Secretary-General's letter outlines recommendations that aim to achieve that goal.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council during its deliberations on the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

I shall confine my remarks to the question of progress in regard to negotiations between the Sudan and South Sudan on the final status of Abyei. It is the resolution of this issue above all else that would allow for a timely exit by UNISFA from Abyei.

As Council members will recall, the African Union High-level Panel, under the chairmanship of

President Mbeki, has considered this question and, in 2013, formulated a proposal to resolve the question of the status of Abyei by means of a referendum. Its proposal, including modalities for such a referendum, was considered and then adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council in 2013. The Sudan opposed the proposal and no further action has been taken to this day. Indeed, in 2014 the Abyei file in each country was transferred to the offices of President Omar Al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir. Since then, notwithstanding occasional meetings between the Presidents over the past five years, the invitation to include Abyei on the agenda of such meetings has been consistently declined by the two principals.

The eruption of civil conflict in South Sudan in 2013 and again in 2016 has seen the issue of Abyei relegated to the sidelines. The two countries' internal predicaments have precluded a discussion on this matter, not least because of the mutual recriminations between them regarding allegations of their support for the respective internal insurgencies in their countries. South Sudan, in particular, was not in a position to drive negotiations on this difficult topic, given the imbalance of power between the two countries. The prevailing tensions between the two countries impacted down the chain of authority. The regularity and tone of meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee intended to deal with the interim administration of the Abyei box reflected this combative approach. The Juba delegation insisted that the Oversight Committee was not empowered to deal with matters relating to the joint administration of the territory.

We now believe that there is good reason to hope that the parties' reluctance to deal with the final-status issue and even the interim administration issues will change. In the past few months, we have seen a remarkable shift in the willingness of the States of the Horn of Africa region to engage neighbours with which they had long-held hostile relations or even open conflict. The rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea has triggered if not the resolution of disputes between the States of the region, then at least a willingness to engage each other to seek solutions. There is now pervasive peer pressure to deal with the conflicts that beset the region, hold back its development and economic integration, or exacerbate political instability in the Horn of Africa. This shift is nowhere better represented than by the efforts of Khatroum to mediate an agreement between the competing parties in the civil conflict in South Sudan.

Sudan has insisted that it is acting in the interests of peace in the region and the building of good-neighbourly relations with South Sudan. Its endeavours have been publicly appreciated by Juba and the other signatory parties of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. There is no doubt that the successful mediation by the Sudan of the outstanding issues in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development peace process has contributed to reducing tensions between Juba and Khartoum. It is notable that part of the agreement is concerned with building a concrete modality of cooperation between the two countries specifically on the rehabilitation of oil fields in Unity state. In my engagements with the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan, I have encouraged them to extend their cooperation in the oil sector to intensified engagements in other fields of mutual benefit. It also seems that the reduction in intensity of both countries' internal civil conflicts, particularly in South Sudan, may enable consideration of a solution to this question as well as the other matters covered in the mutually agreed cooperation agreements.

The new mood has enabled eminent personalities concerned with Abyei, including former Foreign Minister Francis Deng, to generate an informal series of discussions in Khatroum. Their aim is to identify a road map that would rejuvenate cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya and and open a window to discuss the final status of Abyei. It is the first time since 2012, when the Presidents took responsibility for handling the Abyei issue, that it has been possible for the Abyei lobbyists in both countries to undertake direct discussions on this sensitive matter.

The more positive posture between the two countries has encouraged the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to invite the two Foreign Ministers, Deng Alor Kwol and Eldirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, for discussions on Abyei's final status next week. That meeting was intended to take place on the sidelines of an extraordinary session of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. I personally engaged the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs to assess their willingness to engage on this issue and to confirm that the timing for such a discussion was appropriate. They were positive while being clear not to overpromise on a successful outcome. We have just heard that both

Governments have now declined the offer to discuss it on the margins of the Mechanism meeting scheduled for 23 and 24 September, but this is most likely because of the unavailability of the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, owing to their presence here in New York. I remain hopeful, however, that such an engagement will indeed take place. Even if it only serves to put the issue of Abyei's final status on the agenda, it would be a positive move.

Against that backdrop, on two related issues, I can confirm first that, in regard to the Secretary-General's proposal on UNISFA, I believe that the provision of political depth to the UNISFA mission will enable it to better manage the intercommunal relations in Abyei and the adjacent border areas, pending a final solution. Secondly, I can confirm that both the Sudan and South Sudan acknowledge that UNISFA has indisputably contributed to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Area, including through intercommunal dialogue, and that it has prevented a relapse into conflict in Abyei and consequently between the two countries.

The President: I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): Allow me to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for their briefings. I also take this opportunity to say how much we have appreciated Mr. Haysom's dedicated efforts and contributions on the issue of Abyei over the past two years.

We are pleased to note once again that the security situation in Abyei remains generally stable. Indeed, Abyei has become a vibrant hub between the Sudan and South Sudan and an area of sanctuary for refugees coming from various communities. That is a direct result of the stability created by the presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in the area. It is a stark contrast to the situation of six or seven years ago, and UNISFA deserves to be commended for what it has been able to accomplish — essentially, maintaining a peaceful and stable situation in the Abyei Area.

That, however, should not lead us to let down our guard. We can have no doubt that the continued presence of UNISFA is absolutely critical to maintaining that general stability. Without the presence of UNISFA, there is still a very real risk of resumption of intercommunal violence. As the Secretary-General has said, the success in keeping relative calm in Abyei and along the border should not be taken as sign that the issues have been resolved. They have not.

The Sudan and South Sudan may have made significant progress towards activating the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). However, little has been done to implement the 20 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area. That includes the failure to form the joint interim institutions that were supposed to be put in place pending the final resolution of the Abyei issue.

Given that reality, it makes sense to consider reconfiguring the mission in order to increase its ability to assist the parties in fully implementing their agreements. That, after all, was the main reason for the deployment of UNISFA in the first place. We appreciate the Secretary-General for taking the initiative in that regard. We share most of the assessments and recommendations in his report.

We agree that the tasks of UNISFA along the border should be aligned and complement what it does in the Abyei box. We consider JBVMM to be intrinsic to the mandate of UNISFA. Indeed, what UNISFA has been able to achieve in maintaining peace and stability in the Abyei Area has much to do with what it does in preventing confrontation along the border through the JBVMM. That should serve as a platform going forward. Altering those arrangements would have serious implications on the ground for wider regional stability.

We also concur with the Secretary-General that the JBVMM remains a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the two countries. There has not been a single confrontation between their armies since the inclusion of the JBVMM as part of UNISFA's mandate in 2012. That is a clear testament to the importance of the operation and functioning of the Mechanism. We would therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendations for the Mechanism to be deployed fully and for the 2012 agreements on security arrangements and the border to be implemented.

However, we do not think that transferring troops from the Abyei box to the JBVMM is the right approach to making the Mechanism fully functional. Reducing the troop levels in the box would have serious implications. We strongly advise that the troop levels remain

unchanged. Additionally, we find it difficult to support the proposal to deploy police forces at the expense of troop levels. Certainly, there is merit in the deployment of police, especially in the absence of the envisaged Abyei Police Service, but we believe that it is premature to reduce troop levels in the box in the absence of the full implementation of the 2012 agreements.

The proposed reinforcement and reconfiguration of the civilian capacity of the mission are certainly timely. The population has high expectations that UNISFA can deliver humanitarian and development assistance now that it has secured the stability of the area. A strengthened civilian component could relieve the troops from taking on additional civilian responsibilities in the absence of basic administrative structures. We strongly support the establishment of a dedicated civilian programme and echo the Secretary-General's call for donors to finance projects focusing on reconciliation and development and tailored to the needs of the two communities.

All of this, I must say, strongly underlines the importance of continuing to engage fully with all relevant stakeholders, particularly the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan. The consent of concerned parties is a basic principle of peacekeeping, and the agreement of both Governments is critical to any adjustment of UNISFA's mission concept. That is all the more important given the unique nature of UNISFA's deployment.

I can say with confidence that UNISFA has become one of our most effective peacekeeping missions. It has made impressive and hard-won gains. Nevertheless, we can all recognize the fragility of the relative stability along the border and in the box. Whatever decisions we take, we should ensure that they do not negate UNISFA's work. We must continue to develop and advance on the basis of the progress already achieved.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan for their valuable briefings.

Today, I would like to discuss three matters regarding the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), namely. the role of the mission, the renewal of its mandate and the nature of that mandate.

First, on the role of the mission, we take note of the proposals of the Secretary-General, contained in his letter dated 20 August (S/2018/778). We recognize the key role of the peacekeeping operation in achieving relative stability in Abyei. We commend the major role played by Ethiopian peacekeepers in bringing about and maintaining stability. UNISFA has become one of the best peacekeeping operations, and we thank Ethiopia for its positive role in that regard. The priority of political solutions must be the Security Council's focus. That can be achieved with the support of peacekeeping operations and in coordination with the host countries.

Secondly, with regard to the renewal of the mission's mandate, we hope that this renewal would be in line with the mission's role and achievements, including the continued work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism which has led to considerably improve the mission's performance.

Pertaining to the technical issues, such as the strength of the mission, the optimal performance of each of its components and their work sites, these are matters that can be discussed by the Security Council in the upcoming weeks in accordance with developments in Abyei.

Concerning bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, there is positive and growing cooperation, which has been welcomed by the neighbouring countries, the League of Arab States, the African Union and the Security Council.

Thirdly, with reference to the nature of the mandate, having taken note this year of the strategic review of the mission and following the adoption of resolution 2416 (2018), any amendment to the mission's mandate must take into account the agreements reached between the two sides on Abyei. Since the approval of the parties is one of the three principles of peacekeeping, and since UNISFA was established on the basis of bilateral understandings in 2011 and 2012, any further step must be taken after consultations between the parties and securing their consent, and not before.

In conclusion, we underscore our determination to pursue consultations with the Sudan and South Sudan in this regard.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the situation in Abyei and the mandate

of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General for its reconfiguration.

We also wish to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, for his briefing.

My delegation will comment on the security and political situation; the implementation of UNISFA support measures for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2412 (2018); and the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the reconfiguration of UNISFA.

On the political front, Côte d'Ivoire notes with regret the meagre progress made in the implementation of the 2012 cooperation agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan. It is our view that, pending the settlement of the final status of the Area and in order to enhance stability and ensure the prosperity and development of the Abyei region, joint institutions must be established in accordance with agreements between the parties on the region and their shared border.

Côte d'Ivoire recognizes the complexity of the political, economic and security situation within each of the two countries. In that regard, we welcome the role played by the Sudanese President in resolving the conflict in South Sudan. However, the stability of the Abyei Area and peace between the two countries remain dependent on the genuine political involvement of the Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders, who should pay due attention to the area given its significance.

On the security front, my country welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei to ensure security and stability in the Area. My delegation also welcomes the efforts of the Interim Force and various United Nations agencies to promote dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts between the various communities living in the area. Nevertheless, as is rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's letter (S/2018/778), the unstable situation in the Area — which remains a source of concern for my country — could deteriorate in the absence of a viable political settlement on the final status of Abyei.

With regard to the implementation of the measures contained in resolution 2412 (2018), Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the continued support by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan for UNISFA air and ground patrols, thereby giving the Force greater freedom of movement in carrying out its mission. My delegation is also pleased to see the resumption of discussions to address issues relating to the demarcation of the shared border. We regret, however, the limited progress made on the resolution of the political issues included in these measures, notably the finalization of the agreement on the three remaining three operating bases of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the holding of meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism.

In this regard, Côte d'Ivoire shares the Secretary-General's view on the need to maintain the support provided by UNISFA to the Mechanism, given the stabilizing role it plays in Abyei. We therefore encourage the authorities of both countries to take advantage of this support and make further efforts to implement the various agreements and measures prescribed by resolution 2412 (2018) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. My country also believes that it is incumbent on the Security Council to urge all parties to become more involved in the expeditious and full implementation of the border agreements and the full operationalization of the Mechanism.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the Government of Ethiopia for its ongoing support in the stabilization of Abyei, and the commitment of UNISFA, whose importance in the area is well established. Its impact in terms of stabilization is undeniable and it has also contributed to the prevention of clashes among local populations, as well as between the respective Sudanese and South Sudanese armed forces for the past seven years. However, it is important that the mandate of UNISFA be adapted not only to reflect the changing situation on the ground but also to enhance its efficiency in implementing its obligations to protect civilian populations.

My delegation therefore takes note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the reconfiguration of the mission's mandate and welcomes his clarifications on the harmonization of the roles to be played by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. We welcome the recommendations for the implementation of specific recovery and development programmes for the people of the Area, in coordination with the United Nations country team.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire will continue to lend our full attention to these recommendations, which will undoubtedly prove enlightening to Council members in their discussions on the renewal of the UNISFA mandate.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their comprehensive updates on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and for their efforts to support the Sudan and South Sudan in settling the outstanding issues between the two countries on Abyei.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations on the adjustment of the UNISFA mandate and would like to share the following observations.

Kazakhstan considers that long-term stability and peace in Abyei can be achieved only through the full implementation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area of June 2011 and the cooperation agreement of September 2012. We note the importance of the work carried out by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel under the leadership of President Mbeki to provide political support to advance implementation of the agreements.

We are worried that, despite the stable security situation, there has been insufficient progress on the final status of Abyei. We therefore support the recommendations of the Secretary-General to enhance the mission's role in the settlement of border disputes and the final status of Abyei, in close collaboration with the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel.

We commend UNISFA for successfully facilitating stability and reconciliation between the two communities and mitigating intercommunal violence in Abyei. We underscore the important role of the UNISFA police component in maintaining law and order through community-based interactive patrols and the capacity-building of community protection committees. UNISFA should continue its negotiations with both sides to establish community protection committees in northern Abyei, as well as to support joint peace committee meetings.

Despite some delays in the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), the two Governments have made important steps towards the full functioning of the Mechanism. We reiterate that the Mechanism plays a critical role in maintaining stability in Abyei and in preventing confrontations along the Sudan-South Sudan border. We therefore generally support the Secretary-General's proposals to make several changes to the UNISFA concept with regard to its military, police and civilian components. At the same time, any decision on such a reconfiguration should be made in discussion and by agreement among the two countries.

We also underscore the importance of the suggestion to foster the nexus between peace and development by implementing programmes that would benefit both communities, and we join the Secretary-General's call on donors to allocate funding for projects that focus on development and reconciliation. We hope that those recommendations will be accepted during the renewal of the UNISFA mandate.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to Special Envoy Haysom and the Ethiopian military contingent for their dedication to and laudable efforts in preserving peace and stability in the Abyei Area, and we assure them of Kazakhstan's full support.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the presidency of the United States for convening today's meeting in this format. It has been a long time since we discussed this topic in an open meeting.

We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for the information that they have shared with the Security Council today.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia agrees with the Secretary-General that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) is one of the most successful peacekeeping missions. We highlight the commitment of its staff and the cooperation of the Government of Ethiopia, which have led to the current state of relative stability in Abyei and along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan.

While we emphasize the stability of the Area, we recognize that the political, humanitarian and security

situation continues to present challenges, to which UNISFA is responding within its means, limited by several factors beyond its control. It is clear to us that it is the Governments of both countries that must advance more in the development of measures to build mutual trust, which would allow for the implementation of the 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area and for identifying the definitive status of the Area.

In that regard, we have taken note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General to adjust the UNISFA mandate. We agree in principle that its objective should be the implementation of the cooperation agreements with respect to border issues, security arrangements and the final status of Abyei, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. Similarly, we agree that it is necessary for UNISFA to reinforce its support for the parties in the implementation of the signed agreements.

We commend the good offices of UNISFA for bringing the parties together and rekindling the political process, as well as promoting understanding and reconciliation between the Dinka Ngok and Misseriya communities by promoting coexistence between them through commercial activities and the creation of community protection committees, helping to establish bonds of trust that are critical to the inhabitants of the area. In particular, we must continue working to further reduce the tensions in the Amiet common market, which, as we know, is the economic centre of the region and allows for the meeting of both parties.

Another important point for my delegation is, undoubtedly, maintaining UNISFA support for the development of the operational capacity of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, which is crucial to maintaining good relations between both countries. Moreover, while emphasizing that UNISFA cannot replace the role of the State, the cooperation of both countries is necessary in consolidating institutions that manage the area properly and can guarantee basic services to the population of Abyei. Likewise, international cooperation is critical to financing projects that meet the needs of the communities of the area, mainly in the areas of reconciliation and development.

We wish to take advantage of the presence of the representative of the Sudan to commend the role that his country has played in the signing of the recent Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and we understand that the process may have delayed the meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. While it is necessary to take such variables into account, we encourage the parties to hold meetings of the Mechanism that could lead to concrete results.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General for the recommendations he has presented. Bolivia supports the extension of the UNISFA mandate while maintaining its operational capacity and support for the Mechanism, as well as continuing to encourage the parties to work together to establish specific measures, as we did in resolution 2386 (2017). Any change to the mission's mandate must first be coordinated with the countries involved and based on consultations with troop-contributing countries and regional and subregional organizations, and take the Secretary-General's recommendations into account.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for their informative briefings.

This meeting comes at an important time for the Sudan and South Sudan. The situation on the ground in Abyei is stable, there are significant improvements in the relations between the two countries and the signing of the peace agreement to revitalize the 2011 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan give rise to hope, even though we are all aware that we should be cautious regarding its implementation. On that point, we must be not only proactive, but also clear-sighted and insistent.

In that regard, I wish to broach two points, first, on the implementation of the requests made by the Security Council concerning border demarcation, and, secondly, on the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the evolution of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

In resolution 2416 (2018), the Council set out clear objectives for the parties regarding border demarcation and, in the light of the facts outlined by Jean-Pierre Lacroix, our clear observation is that the progress made

does not meet our expectations. There has been some progress, in particular the issuance of authorizations for UNISFA patrols and Saturday's meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. However, the overall outcome is disappointing, especially with regard to the establishment of operating bases for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism or the opening of border-crossing corridors.

We are aware of the constraints on the parties. The rainy season is making work difficult and peace efforts in South Sudan have monopolized the mission's efforts. However, we strongly encourage the parties to do more, faster, to make progress on border demarcation. In that context, UNISFA must continue to play a vital role, but the recommendations made by the Secretary-General must allow us to adapt it to the situation on the ground. In that respect, I would like to underline four points.

First, the proposed choice to strengthen the political posture of UNISFA must be supported. Indeed, stabilizing Abyei and the border is essential; that has been a major achievement for UNISFA. However, it is also necessary for UNISFA to contribute more to the political settlement of the Abyei issue and other border disputes. Naturally, UNISFA is in no way a substitute for the work of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel or the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, which we fully support.

Secondly, the proposed scaling up of the police component would respond to the challenge of rising crime in the region. That is a key issue, as we must not allow a culture of impunity to develop, particularly with regard to sexual assault.

Thirdly, the proposed redeployment and overall reduction of the military component are also a move in the right direction. That must be undertaken sensibly in order to preserve the stability of Abyei and the border. The balance that we wish to strike is of course to seek to improve the effectiveness of the Force without running the risk of weakening it or undermining the stability of the region.

Finally, I would like to emphasize relations with local stakeholders and populations. UNISFA must support local initiatives that are useful to the political process. It is important for the country team to be encouraged to develop projects focused on reconciliation and development, in the spirit of and in accordance with the Secretary-General's sustaining peace initiative, which must guide all our actions.

In conclusion, I congratulate and warmly thank the Special Envoy for the excellent work he has done, and wish him much success in his new position.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to first extend our thanks to our briefers for their updates this morning on the situation.

We welcome the fact that the security situation in Abyei has remained relatively calm, while we are aware that the situation still remains unpredictable and tense. The situation could quickly deteriorate and, in that case, have unacceptable consequences for civilians. Also, considering the instability in nearby areas, we very much agree with the Secretary-General that the continued presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remains crucial.

We commend the work of the mission and the Ethiopian troops carrying out that important mandate. Protecting civilians, securing access for humanitarian assistance, mediating migration-based conflicts, facilitating the return of displaced persons and demilitarizing the border region are all tasks that are vital to upholding stability in the Area.

Seven years after UNISFA's creation, we are regrettably no closer to a political solution. The current impasse cannot be allowed to continue, and we must step up efforts to find new ways forward. UNISFA needs to remain part of the path towards the normalization of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan. United Nations efforts should always aim at reaching political solutions, and its mission should be calibrated to advance that objective. That is also true for UNISFA. The implementation of the relevant chapters of the cooperation agreement — namely, border issues and security arrangements, and the settlement of the final status of Abyei — is the end state that needs to be achieved. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to give the mission an augmented role in supporting the political process.

In that context, we also commend the work of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel and UNISFA's cooperation with the Panel must be maintained and further synergies with the efforts of the African Union should be sought.

We share the sense of frustration that the parties have not built on the positive momentum of last spring and carried through the actions that were expected of them. Some efforts have been made and small positive

steps taken, but much more needs to be done to reach a political settlement that addresses the underlying issues. We hope that the recent positive developments in the relations between the Sudan and South Sudan can also contribute to reaching a political solution on the future status of Abyei.

The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVBMM) is a vital part of the framework that regulates the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan, which also contributes to overall stability in the border area. As stated in the Secretary-General's letter (S/2018/778), no single confrontation between the parties' forces has taken place since the inclusion of the JBVMM in the mission's mandate in 2012. We agree that there is a need to push for further progress, rather than risk the gains that have been made.

Furthermore, in the absence of the envisaged temporary institutions, UNISFA has been carrying out crucial tasks in areas that were not foreseen. We particularly commend the work done in addressing sexual and gender-based violence and children's rights. There is a serious governance vacuum, and the mission must be equipped to appropriately address that. It should, for example, have the tools to also support mediation opportunities and address essential law and order issues.

Let me conclude by extending our sincere thanks to Special Envoy Haysom for his relentless engagement and invaluable contribution to that work. His efforts have contributed not only to the issue before us today, but to the whole region. We will miss the clarity and straightforwardness of his briefings, but we also look forward to continuing to closely work with him in his new important role in Somalia.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their excellent briefings.

There are three issues that I will raise today that are of key concern for the Kingdom of the Netherlands: first, the progress on the implementation of the benchmarks, and I was glad that the Under-Secretary-General was so specific about those; secondly, the importance of stability in the region; and thirdly, accountability and the rule of law.

First, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is disappointed by the lack of progress on border demarcation. The majority of the measures set out in resolution 2412 (2018) have not been implemented. We welcome the clearances for patrols. Those are important to facilitating the full freedom of movement for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). But we are still waiting for a number of important steps, and those include the meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism that are supposed to breathe new life into efforts to find a sustainable solution for the Abyei region. The announcement that the Mechanism will convene later this week is encouraging, but we reiterate the need to see concrete progress on the implementation of the benchmarks from resolution 2412 (2018). The Kingdom of the Netherlands expresses appreciation for the recent efforts of the region towards peace in South Sudan, and we are hopeful that this will be a fundamental step towards peace in the region. It thereby has the potential to improve the enabling environment for the JBVMM.

Secondly, I want to emphasize that stability in the region remains our primary objective. The letter of the Secretary-General (S/2018/778) underlines once again the essential role of UNISFA in guaranteeing stability in the Abyei and border areas. The Security Council has a long-standing commitment to peace and security in that region, and it continues to play a role in preventing violence from escalating further. We therefore support the recommendations of the Secretary-General. In particular, we believe that it is important to create a political space as the next step forward. Adding a civilian component to the mission would contribute to that objective.

Thirdly and finally, I would like to stress the importance of the rule of law and accountability for a stable future in Abyei. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the peace/development nexus should be enhanced; in particular, justice and accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened. We see an important role for the United Nations country teams to play in that respect. Criminality is rising in the Abyei region in the absence of domestic security forces. It is vital to build the rule-of-law capacity in local communities. We therefore support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to increase the police component of the mission; in particular, deploying female officers could serve a crucial role. We encourage the Secretary-General to increase his efforts to do so.

In conclusion, recent developments show a mixed picture. On the one hand, there is disappointment over the progress on the benchmarks, and on the other, there have been encouraging developments towards peace in the region. The Abyei border conflict remains unresolved. In the coming weeks, the Council will decide on the way forward for the mission. In doing so, we should all work towards long-term stability in the region.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom — for the information they have shared with us today. Since this is most probably the last time that we are hearing from Special Envoy Haysom in the Council in his current capacity, I would like to convey our appreciation for his hard work and commitment, and wish him all the best in his new assignment in Somalia.

Let me focus my intervention on two points: the current situation in Abyei and the work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

We take note of the relatively stable security situation in Abyei at the moment, but at the same time we recognize the challenges that remain on the political, humanitarian and economic fronts. We note with regret the lack of progress in the political process and the fact that an administrative vacuum still exists in the Abyei Area. The absence of effective formal authorities in Abyei results in limited law enforcement and a lack of good governance and the rule of law. It also hinders the delivery of basic services to the population and in particular affects access to safe drinking water, education and health services.

I would like to emphasize that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the 2011 and 2012 agreements lies with the Governments of both countries. Poland believes that the Security Council should remain unified in its messaging and encourage the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan to swiftly establish the joint mechanisms in their full capabilities, normalize border arrangements and — in the long-term perspective — elaborate a political solution that will lead to lasting peace in Abyei. Let me also stress the need to include women and youth in the ongoing political process. There can be no doubt that the current relative stability in Abyei is a result of the role played by UNISFA. In that regard, Poland would like to commend the efforts of the Ethiopian troops and all of the United Nations personnel in Abyei.

We thank the Secretary-General for his recommendations on how to adjust UNISFA to the current situation in Abyei and the needs of border communities of the Sudan and of South Sudan. We agree that the Interim Force has to be able to meet the needs on the ground. Therefore, UNISFA should stand ready to engage in achieving a political solution in Abyei and to support the implementation of the agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan, in cooperation with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. We believe that the suggested reconfiguration of the mission's tasks should be taken into account by the Council and that further consultations thereon should be held with the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as with the African Union.

Let me conclude by stressing that there can be no other way for the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve the question of Abyei than through dialogue, including intercommunal dialogue and reconciliation, and a genuine political process. UNISFA's presence remains crucial for the stability of Abyei, but it cannot substitute for the role of the State. Poland believes that the Security Council should remain united on this issue and support all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the status of Abyei.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, and the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Haysom, for their briefings.

The situation at present in the Abyei Area is generally stable. There are obvious changes when compared to what prevailed six years ago. China appreciates the efforts of the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan, the African Union (AU), the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the international community.

A few days ago, the parties in South Sudan officially signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which laid an important foundation for ending the conflict and achieving peace in South Sudan. The Agreement also created favourable conditions for further improving relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and for properly settling the Abyei issue. China continues to

believe that a political solution to the Abyei issue is the only way out. The Security Council and the international community should strengthen coordination and provide constructive help.

First, it is important to fully respect the leadership of the Sudan and of South Sudan on the Abyei issue. Those are the countries concerned. Furthermore, the issue cannot be resolved without their cooperation and coordination. The international community should maintain the enthusiasm of the two countries in committing themselves to a political settlement of the Abyei issue, help consolidate their good neighbourly relations, enhance their mutual trust and deepen their pragmatic cooperation in the Abyei Area. Actions contrary to the consensus of the two countries must be avoided.

Secondly, it is important to let the AU and other regional organizations act as the main channel of mediation. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel has long overcome many difficulties, actively carried out good offices and played an important bridging role in achieving reconciliation between the Sudan and South Sudan. The international community should continue to provide the necessary support for the AU to carry out its work.

Thirdly, it is important to support UNISFA's continued delivery of its mandate which, in accordance with the mandate of the Council, has supported the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and has played a key role in stabilizing the border of the Sudan and South Sudan. China supports UNISFA's continued implementation of its mandate, for which China hopes that the international community will provide constructive help. China has noted that the Secretary-General addressed a letter to the Security Council (S/2018/778) a few days ago in which he proposed reorganizing UNISFA and adjusting its mandate in the light of the latest developments. Concerning the relevant recommendations, we hope the Secretary-General will further communicate and coordinate with the Sudanese and South Sudanese Governments, the AU and the relevant troop-contributing countries. We also hope that he will fully heed their views in order to bring into better play the role of the peacekeeping forces and to help advance the proper settlement of the Abyei issue.

China has always attached great importance to peace and development in Africa and has always supported the solution of African issues by African countries and with African methods. China is willing to continue to work with African countries and the international community to contribute to the promotion of peace, stability and development in Africa.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Mr. Nicholas Haysom for their important briefings.

First, we want to highlight the role that the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) plays in Abyei in maintaining relative security in the Area and in allowing communities access to humanitarian aid. We believe, however, that it is imperative to revive the political process and fill the governance and administrative vacuum in Abyei. In the light of that, we wish to express our support for the Secretary-General's recommendations for a reconfiguration of the UNISFA mandate. We trust that a more active role for UNISFA in supporting the implementation of the agreements between the Sudan and South South Sudan, and its coordination and cooperation with the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, will enable the final objective of the mission and guide Abyei towards the consolidation of sustainable peace.

We deem it appropriate that UNISFA be able to contribute to the resolution of border disputes and, as recommended by the Secretary-General, that it be able to concentrate its military component in the border areas where security threats are greater. In that regard, we must recognize the important role of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to maintain stable relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, and express our concern about how little progress has been made in implementing the measures established by the Council in resolution 2412 (2018).

We hope that the recent developments in the Horn of Africa subregion will provide the necessary impetus to the Governments of the Sudan and of South Sudan to move forward with concrete measures leading to the resolution of the question of the status of Abyei and the establishment of the common border. At the same time, we think it desirable that UNISFA support the strengthening of institutions that guarantee governance, the rule of law and public order in Abyei. In that sense, we value the recommendation to deploy police units in

the main population centres and specialized agents in all the bases of operations.

In line with the need to address the root causes of the conflict, we hope that the measures recommended by the Secretary-General, such as the creation of a specific programme for the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, will be taken into account to promote development and reconciliation in Abyei.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, for their very informative and enlightening briefings on the reality in the Abyei Area. The inhabitants of Abyei have already suffered for too long. That is why we believe that the current stability in the Area must continue.

Equatorial Guinea welcomes the progress made in fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We therefore support its activities in the Area and consider it a significant factor in ending the conflict that has brought suffering to the inhabitants of Abyei. It is important that the parties refrain from taking actions that could complicate the situation.

However, we are concerned about the internal political tensions, the continuing simmering disputes and the fact that the parties have not made use of the relative calm on their borders to properly address the situation in order to resolve the outstanding issues.

In that regard, we would therefore like to encourage the parties involved — the Sudan and South Sudan — to act responsibly and to implement the measures adopted concerning their borders. I am referring to the Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan signed in September 2012, which has played a stabilizing role in the Area. Without that step, it will be very difficult to strengthen the desired peace in the Area.

Furthermore, in that context the Security Council must play a constructive role in supporting the efforts of UNISFA to fulfil its mandate. We wish to commend its work in facilitating access to humanitarian assistance and its delivery, since there continue to be significant humanitarian needs, which could be exacerbated by the tensions among the communities and the lack of basic services. The two Governments should also cooperate with UNISFA in that regard.

It is important that the mission play a more active and proactive role in support of a political solution to resolve the final status of Abyei, including the implementation by the Sudan and South Sudan of the agreements concluded in 2011 on border issues and security arrangements.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our congratulations to all those that have facilitated the progress in the Abyei Area that we mentioned today, namely, the African Union, UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, which have demonstrated commendable resolve in the pursuit of peace and security in the border area. We urge them to keep up the momentum and the spirit of commitment required in order to implement the agreements to which I referred.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I would also like to thank Special Envoy Mr. Nicholas Haysom both for his briefing and for his excellent work during his tenure to support peace and stability between South Sudan and the Sudan. We look forward to working with him in his new role.

I would like to touch on three issues. First, I would like to talk about the progress that has been made by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and particularly by the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), against the benchmarks set out in resolution 2412 (2018). The United Kingdom welcomes the maintenance of standing clearance for all UNISFA air and ground patrols, along with the support of both Governments for the mission, particularly in ceasing to obstruct the movements of the mission, as we saw in previous reporting periods. However, as the representative of the Netherlands said, the lack of progress against other benchmarks has been disappointing. We urge both Governments to devote their efforts to changing that. Establishing the four remaining JBVMM team sites and holding two meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism must be a priority.

While the efforts of both Governments are essential to progress, we recognize, as Special Envoy Haysom said, that the wider dynamics, including both the commendable focus of the two Governments on the South Sudan peace process and a lack of agreement

among the local communities for the JBVMM team sites, have contributed to the delays. We therefore believe that it is essential, as the representative of France said, that UNISFA and the JBVMM engage the local communities so that their concerns can be considered and their support garnered.

Secondly, let me touch on the Secretary-General's recommendations for UNISFA, which, broadly speaking, we welcome. We support the recommendation to augment the civilian component of UNIFSA, particularly through the deployment of community liaison officers. We also acknowledge the Secretary-General's recommendation to deploy a civilian Deputy Head of Mission. We commend UNIFSA for improving the security situation in Abyei and for reducing the need for a large military presence in the Area. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that the UNIFSA military component concentrate its deployment along the borders of the Abyei Area in the light of the finding that cross-border military action is the most likely threat to security in the Area. Despite the improvements to the security situation, like many other speakers, we are concerned by reports of increased criminality within the Abyei Area and about the continued delays to establish the joint administrative arrangements, including the Abyei police service. We therefore fully support the recommendation to deploy three formed police units to the three major population centres in the Abyei Area.

Thirdly, and finally — again as other speakers have said — only a political settlement can address the underlying causes of the conflict and ensure that long-term stability for the people of Abyei is a reality. It is therefore the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure that the mission is resourced appropriately to support that overarching aim. We very much welcome Special Envoy Haysom's sense of optimism, which I detected, with regard to the fact that the Sudan and South Sudan are now more willing and more able to make progress on the political track. I look forward to hearing from the representatives of both those countries today as to how they intend to do that. Of course, they will have our full support.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for their substantive briefings.

We believe that the continuation of the joint efforts of the parties, including the political dialogue at the highest level, are key to the successful progress of the intra-Sudanese peace process. The basis for cooperation between Khartoum and Juba exists, namely, the bilateral agreements concluded in September 2012 in Addis Ababa, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We welcome the improvement recently noted in the relations between the two Sudans. We pay tribute to the effective participation of Khartoum in the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to revitalize the South Sudanese Peace Agreement.

We note the efforts of the African Union and its High-level Implementation Panel under the leadership of Mr. Thabo Mbeki. We hope that the Panel will continue to be an important mechanism for promoting the normalization of relations between the two countries.

We note with satisfaction the generally stable situation in Abyei, as well as the constructive relations of the personnel of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNIFSA) with the local inhabitants and the measures taken by UNIFSA to prevent intercommunal clashes.

Among the positive aspects, we would also like to highlight the periodic holding of meetings of peace committees with representatives of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. We welcome the fact that law enforcement and economic matters are addressed at such events. It is important that the Amiet common market is slowly becoming the economic hub not only for Abyei but for the region as a whole. We are convinced that it has contributed to strengthening trust and reconciliation between the two communities.

We regret that not all of the provisions of the inter-Sudanese Agreement of 20 June 2011 are being implemented. A power vacuum remains in the Area. The demilitarized status of Abyei and the buffer zone along the inter-Sudanese border is being violated. We would like to see increased regular contact between the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan.

With regard to the enhanced Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), we welcome the progress made by the parties in fulfilling their obligations to make it fully operational. We believe that the JBVMM is an important element in preventing

incidents between the two parties. We continue to believe that scaling back UNISFA support for the Mechanism could completely paralyse the structure and have a negative impact on the prospects for a full resolution to the situation in Abyei. Guided by that, we supported the adoption of resolution 2412 (2018), which extended the UNISFA mandate by six months. We will be ready to support a similar extension in October.

We took note of the letter of the Secretary-General (S/2018/778), which includes proposals on reconfiguring UNISFA. We believe that the issue must be carefully addressed and examined. We understand that there is little progress being made in resolving the Abyei dispute. We note that a whole range of factors has prevented Khartoum and Juba from demonstrating the flexibility required to resolve the final status of Abyei. In that regard, UNISFA plays a very important role in maintaining stability in the region. Once again, we would like to recall that UNISFA is operating within the confines of traditional peacekeeping, in which the parties to the conflict are States. When making decisions on reconfiguring the Mission, it is important to be guided by the basic principles of peacekeeping. We believe that the changes proposed by the Secretariat with regard to strengthening the civilian component and changing the mandate and personnel ceiling of the mission must first be supported by both Khartoum and Juba. We must also take into account the views of the troop-contributing countries. If not, the effect of the reconfiguration could be the exact opposite of what is intended.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and for the explanation of the recommendations for the reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). I also thank Special Envoy Haysom for his briefing. Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude for all of his contributions as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan. We are sorry to lose his skills and knowledge on the portfolio but we wish him the best of luck in his next role with the United Nations in Somalia.

The United States appreciates UNISFA's successful work to stabilize Abyei, and specifically commends Ethiopia for its contributions. The mission's efforts to stabilize the Area and to work with local communities to strengthen ties, resolve disputes and increase peace and security have greatly contributed to the general calm in the contested Area between the Sudan and South Sudan. It is now time to ensure that we can reconfigure the mission to reflect the new realities on the ground and better address its existing security and administrative concerns, as the Council unanimously endorsed in the recent mandate renewal.

Our analysis of the Secretary-General's reconfiguration recommendations is that they are a good start to align UNISFA with realities on the ground, but they do not go far enough. We believe that significant security gains in recent years warrant a reduction in the overall number of uniformed personnel in the mission. The improved security situation in the Abyei Area and other border areas no longer demands the current level of military personnel. Thanks to the firm benchmarks established by the Council, there has been some progress in the past year to operationalize the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM). However, the parties have not met all of the benchmarks outlined by the Council, as other speakers have pointed out.

More than half a decade since its creation, the JBVMM has still not realized its full potential. We regret the fact that the parties have not convened a Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting and that progress on other benchmarks appear stalled. We urge the parties to take steps to meet the benchmarks laid out in resolution 2412 (2018) before the deadline of 15 October. The Security Council should not, and the United States will not, indefinitely support a Mechanism that remains underutilized and is not making progress on resolving the political issues at the root of UNISFA's JBVMM support mandate, especially if the parties are unwilling to fully commit to the political process and disregard Security Council benchmarks.

We agree with the Secretary-General that a reorientation towards a police-style mission is necessary in order to solidify the peace and stability that the Ethiopian peacekeepers have worked so hard to secure. The establishment of the Abyei police service and the provision of a full-spectrum police service remain essential steps in maintaining stability, while also enabling UNISFA's eventual withdrawal. We agree with the Secretary-General that a strong civilian component is necessary for UNISFA to operate effectively and create the space to resolve underlying political issues. The civilian component would assist

both sides and all communities in maintaining stability, preventing intercommunal conflict and implementing past agreements. We appreciate the role of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in facilitating the settlement of the Abyei dispute. We urge the Panel to continue its mediation efforts to reach an agreement on Abyei's final status and to continue encouraging the parties to implement past agreements.

In missions that generally work well, such as UNISFA, we must give credit where it is due. Therefore, I thank Ethiopia and others that provide personnel and resources to the mission. However, we must think critically about efficiently managing our scarce resources and applying them appropriately to the tasks at hand. We must also question whether or not all of those tasks remain appropriate and necessary. Peacekeeping missions, even ones that generally work well, must have exit strategies and adapt to the changing circumstances and realities of the situation on the ground. For UNISFA, it means a reconfiguration towards realistic police and troop allocations, a strong civilian presence and renewed commitment by the parties to finding a permanent solution to the outstanding issues.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): We are delighted to report to the Security Council for the second time under your presidency, Sir. We would like to recognize Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Special Envoy Haysom for their briefings. We would also like to wish Mr. Haysom the best of luck in his new assignment.

On behalf of our Government, we welcome the Secretary-General's letter regarding the reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and the situation in the Abyei Area (S/2018/778). The proposals the Secretary-General is recommending have been well received by the Dinka Ngok. I hope that the Council was able to read the letter of the Ngok Dinka chiefdoms, which we sent to it yesterday.

While we welcome the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General, we would like to express our concerns regarding the proposed migration police liaising with the resident Misseriya community in the Abyei Area, because, in the long run, that practice may legitimize illegal residency and further occupation of Dinka lands, which continue to discourage the return of Ngok Dinka internally displaced persons to their rightful lands.

Regarding the benchmarks, our Government is still committed to engaging the Government of the Sudan to work together with it to achieve the benchmarks. However, as the Council may know, for technical reasons, the two sides have not been able to meet regularly, especially while the region was preoccupied with the revitalized Peace Agreement negotiations. But we are now reliably informed, that a meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism is scheduled to take place on 23 and 24 September in Addis Ababa.

With regard to resolution 2416 (2018), my delegation would like to propose a way of implementing paragraph 6. Members may recall that paragraph 6 instructs the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to update the Security Council on progress made by the parties on the implementation of the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area and on progress made on the settlement of the final status and two other issues. Since the parties have not been meeting consistently, we would like to propose that the parties directly update the Security Council, jointly or individually.

In conclusion, if it seems that there has been relative peace in the Abyei areas in recent years, it is because, to quote from the letter of the Dinka Ngok chiefs,

> "We fully agree that UNISFA has performed quite well over the past seven years of its presence in the Abyei Area. It has practically averted further confrontation between the Sudan and South Sudan, particularly over Abyei. Furthermore, we believe that the proposed adjustments to the UNISFA mandate will add more dimensions to a sustainable peace across borders and between communities interacting within the Abyei box".

Therefore, to enhance the current UNISFA force level with the proposed police element would be a prudent and wise decision on the part of the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, the Representative of the United Kingdom, on her efforts

while assuming the presidency of the Council last month. I want as well to assure you of the full cooperation of my country's delegation with you.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate the commitment of my country to cooperate with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) so that it can fulfil its mandate pursuant to resolution 1990 (2011). I also thank the Secretary-General for his report to the Security Council (S/2018/778), as well as Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I also would like to wish Special Envoy Haysom every success in his new post.

We should not forget the positive, and even the ideal, circumstances that made it possible to successfully conclude an agreement in July 2011 on the final status of Abyei. That was a direct result of the full commitment to the right to self-determination of South Sudan, which was the basis of the 2005 comprehensive Peace Agreement. That Agreement was an international negotiated one that led to a commitment to strengthening the points of convergence among the two sisterly countries and to avoid the use of any non-peaceful means.

We agreed at the time that we are one people in two States. We believe in the moral obligation as well as the legal commitment to respect the Abyei Agreement, which also addresses the final status of this integral part of the Sudanese territory. I would like to underscore that the stability and security currently prevailing in Abyei and the significant progress being made in terms of coexistence between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, as documented in the report recently presented to the Council, are the direct outcome of efforts deployed by the Government and the communities, as well as the positive role played by UNISFA since its establishment.

Wisdom dictates the need for cooperation among all partners to further consolidate security and stability. It likewise requires that the parties distance themselves from any actions or decisions that could undermine that stability before the final legal status of Abyei is determined. Until then, Abyei is an integral part of Sudanese territory, and the Sudanese Government exercises full sovereignty over that territory.

I wish to recall what the members of the Security Council asserted last year, namely, that achieving security and stability in Abyei is a feat in itself, and that should be preserved and further strengthened.

The Government of the Sudan took note of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and expressed its reservations on some of them because they are in contravention of the 20 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, which is the basis of all arrangements regarding Abyei, including the deployment of UNISFA. Indeed, the two parties to the Agreement — that is, the Government of the Sudan and the People's Liberation Movement of Sudan, which later became the Government of South Sudan — remain bound by that Agreement until the final status of Abyei is determined.

I wish to quote from article 41:

> "This Agreement and the Abyei Protocol (except as modified by the terms herein) shall continue to apply until such time as the final status of Abyei has been resolved."

I would also like to recall article 29 of the same Agreement, which links any amendment in the UNISFA mandate to the consent of both parties to the Agreement. That Article reads as follows:

> "The Government of Sudan and the SPLM will request the United Nations Security Council to approve the deployment and mandate of the ISFA, with the understanding that the mandate referred to in paragraph 27 of this Agreement shall not be changed without agreement of the Government of Sudan, the SPLM and the Government of Ethiopia."

My country's Government underscores its commitment to implementing all the agreements reached with the Republic of South Sudan, beginning with the 2004 Protocol on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Abyei Area, the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area and the 27 September 2012 agreement on bilateral cooperation. We call on our brothers and sisters in the Government of South Sudan to cooperate meaningfully with the Government of the Sudan and the African Union in order to accelerate the setting up of institutions in Abyei pursuant to the Agreement of June 2011. That would make it possible to resolve the final status of Abyei. Those institutions include a joint administration in Abyei, a joint legislative council and a joint police service. We all agree that those institutions are essential and indispensable for administering the

Area and establishing peace, providing basic services to the population, strengthening coexistence among the various communities and creating the appropriate, required and necessary conditions towards resolving Abyei's final status, so as to meet the aspirations of all stakeholders within a setting that is acceptable to all.

Allow me to reiterate the need to consider the issue of Abyei as part of the overall relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, taking into account the developments in the internal situations of the two countries. My country's delegation hopes that the latest developments will make it possible to strengthen bilateral relations and address the pending issues, at the top of which is the issue of Abyei, especially given that the Sudan has hosted peace negotiations between the South Sudanese parties and exerted tireless efforts, with the recognition of the Security Council, which on 12 September led to the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

In conclusion, allow me once again to thank all our partners who have endeavoured to facilitate the work of UNISFA, in particular the Government of the sisterly Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission, the High-level Implementation Panel, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan and the staff of UNISFA, along with the Secretariat. I also reiterate the Sudan's commitment to continue working with UNISFA in order to allow it to carry out all its tasks. I support what Mr. Lacroix and certain members of the Council have said, namely, about the importance of holding more consultations in order to strengthen the existing positive situation and promote our collective determination on the issue.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8358

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8358th meeting
Thursday, 20 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now welcome and give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote this briefing to presenting the seventh report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), covering the period from 13 June to 12 September 2018. I will focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance peace.

Let me reiterate from the very beginning that these developments cannot be divorced from the broader context: Israel's continued military occupation of Palestinian territory; uncertainties about the future of the peace process and the two-State solution; Hamas' continuing hold on Gaza and its militant activity, including rocket attacks and tunnel construction; unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts; reduced donor support for the Palestinian Authority; and turmoil in the wider region.

I would like to highlight from the outset the very serious financial situation that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to face. We welcome the contributions that several Member States recently announced and urge that additional new funding be provided for its critical work. On 27 September, a ministerial meeting in support of UNRWA will be held on the margins of the General Assembly. I urge all participants to engage constructively to ensure the continuity of the Agency's vital services.

No steps have been taken during the reporting period to "cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem", as required by the resolution. I reiterate that all settlement activities are a violation of international law and a major obstacle to peace.

Approximately 2,800 housing units in settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank were advanced, approved or tendered by Israel. Approximately one third of those units are in outlying settlements, deep in the West Bank. Plans for about 1,100 units were advanced in the approval process, plans for an additional 600 units reached the final approval stage and tenders were announced for about 1,100 units. A tender was also announced for 603 housing units in the Ramat Shlomo neighbourhood, the first tender in East Jerusalem since 2016.

On 28 August, the district court in Jerusalem ruled that the illegal outpost of Mizpe Kramim could be legalized under Israeli law, despite being built partially on private Palestinian land. The ruling was the first to rely on the so-called market regulation principle, which allows houses to be built in good faith on private land, without the consent of the owner to be retroactively legalized and the owner compensated. If the ruling is upheld in Israel's High Court of Justice, it could enable the legalization of additional outposts and housing units in settlements.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, 117 structures were demolished or seized: 61 in Area C and 56 in East Jerusalem. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), that resulted in the displacement of 145 Palestinians, including 82 children, and affected the livelihoods of approximately 950 people.

In Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu, a Bedouin community of 181 people, Israeli authorities requisitioned land, levelled access routes and temporarily declared the area a closed military zone, in advance of the expected demolition of its structures. Following a protracted legal process, on 5 September, the Israeli High Court of Justice denied several petitions by residents to prevent the demolition. On 4 July, in Abu Nuwar, a Bedouin community of about 600 residents, 19 structures were demolished. OCHA reported that 51 people, including 33 children, were displaced. Later that month a donor-funded caravan

in the Bedouin community of Jabal Al-Baba, serving as a kindergarten for 28 children and as a women's centre, was also confiscated and dismantled. Those communities are located in or next to an area that is slated for settlement plans in the E-1 area, which, if constructed, would create a continuous built-up area between the Ma'ale Adumim and East Jerusalem.

In July, the Israeli Knesset approved a law transferring the jurisdiction over certain petitions against decisions by Israeli authorities in the West Bank from the High Court of Justice to the administrative affairs court in Jerusalem. That step could make it more difficult and costly to challenge the demolition or seizure of Palestinian properties in Area C.

On 11 September, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, called on Israeli authorities to reconsider the decision to allow the demolition of Khan Al-Ahmar, warning that "it would have grave humanitarian consequences" and contravene international humanitarian law. That call was reiterated by Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. I also issued a statement expressing the same concern over such action. On 13 September, the European Parliament also called for monetary compensation for financial losses, should Khan Al-Ahmar be demolished.

Let me turn to the issue of violence, which also remains an obstacle to peace. The reporting period saw significant incidents and escalation that brought Israel and Hamas almost to war on at least three occasions.

Palestinian protests at the Gaza fence continued on almost a daily basis. While most occasions remained fairly peaceful, militants placed improvised explosive devices, attempted to breach the fence and continued to send incendiary kites and balloons across the border. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) responded with riot dispersal means and live fire. During protests throughout the reporting period, 29 Palestinians were killed or died of wounds sustained previously, including 10 children. Approximately 900 people were injured by live ammunition. One Israeli soldier was killed and another injured.

In successive rounds of hostilities, Hamas and other Palestinian militants fired approximately 500 rockets, Grad missiles and mortars from Gaza towards Israel. In response, the IDF fired approximately 400 missiles and tank shells at targets in Gaza. It destroyed three tunnels leading from Gaza into Israel. 18 Palestinians were killed, including 5 children, 118 injured, and 37 Israelis were injured in those exchanges. On at least three occasions the situation escalated dramatically. Calm was restored only after Egypt and the United Nations intervened to de-escalate tensions.

Incendiary kites and balloons continued to be launched from Gaza into neighbouring Israeli communities. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 266 Palestinians, including 5 women and 54 children, were injured in clashes with Israeli security forces during search-and-arrest operations and demonstrations.

On 23 July, a 15-year-old Palestinian was killed during clashes in Bethlehem's Al-Duheisha refugee camp. Three days later, in the settlement of Adam, a 17-year-old Palestinian stabbed and killed an Israeli man and injured two others. On 17 August and 3 September, Israeli security forces shot dead an Israeli-Arab and a Palestinian in Jerusalem's Old City and in Hebron, respectively, after they reportedly attempted to carry out stabbing attacks against security forces.

On 27 July, clashes erupted at the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif compound between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, where 10 Palestinians and four Israeli police officers were injured. On 16 September, in another attack a Palestinian teenager stabbed and killed an Israeli-American outside a shopping mall in the occupied West Bank. It is reprehensible that Hamas and other factions chose to glorify that attack.

Despite the call in resolution 2334 (2016) for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, such statements continued. Hamas leaders continued to incite violence, with one senior official speaking of "cleansing Palestine of the filth of Jews" and threatening to decapitate Israeli leaders. Fatah's official social media pages continued to glorify the perpetrators of previous attacks against Israelis and failed to condemn terror attacks against civilians. Some religious leaders and officials made inflammatory statements, accusing Israel of plotting to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and denying the Jewish historic and religious connection to Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, some Israeli officials called for the targeting of Palestinians launching incendiary kites and balloons into Israel from Gaza and for the extrajudicial killings of Hamas officials. One member of the Knesset called for Israel to reconquer Gaza and insisted that Palestinians in Gaza either acquiesce to

Israel's sovereignty or emigrate. Others continued to provoke by rejecting the Palestinian right to statehood, supporting settlement growth and the annexation of parts of the West Bank.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the calls made by the Middle East Quartet for

> "affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution."

Some positive steps have been taken, including Israel releasing approximately $44 million of withheld Palestinian health stamp revenues, which is the result of continuing direct engagement of the Finance Ministries of both sides, as well as continued progress on Gaza reconstruction. The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt remained largely open during the reporting period, with the number of people crossing reaching over 12,000 in both June and July.

The negative developments, however, outweigh the positive news. Most worrying perhaps is the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian, security and political situation in Gaza, as the implementation of the Egyptian-brokered October agreement remains stalled and the Palestinian Authority has not been able to take up its responsibilities in Gaza.

As we meet today, the power crisis in Gaza is coming to a head. The United Nations has run out of funding for emergency fuel, putting critical health, water and sanitation facilities at immediate risk of shutting down, while essential medicines are at critically low levels. On 5 September, the United Nations delivered the final stocks of available emergency fuel to Gaza. Despite calls for donors to urgently contribute, little additional funding was forthcoming.

The situation was worsened by the temporary closures of the Kerem Shalom crossing and reductions in the fishing zone that were introduced by Israel during the periods of escalation, as well as the continuing measures by the Palestinian Authority to reduce salaries, energy supplies and overall spending in Gaza. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator has released $1 million from the emergency pooled fund to cover fuel for hospitals and water and sanitation facilities to prevent a full collapse of essential services.

To address the chronic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, the humanitarian community appealed for nearly $550 million this year, through the humanitarian response plan, 75 per cent of which is for projects targeting Palestinians in Gaza. At present, the appeal is less than 29 per cent funded, one of the most poorly funded in the world.

Paragraph 5 of resolution 2334 (2016) called on Member States

> "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967".

No such steps were taken during the reporting period. The resolution also called upon all parties to continue to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations. No progress was achieved in that respect.

The United States has repeatedly announced that it is continuing its efforts aimed at a comprehensive peace plan. In August, the Administration suspended more than $200 million in its fiscal year 2017 Economic Support Fund for the West Bank and Gaza, and a further $25 million for the East Jerusalem hospitals network. On 10 September, it closed the Palestine Liberation Organization Office in Washington, D.C., citing its failure to take steps towards meaningful negotiations with Israel and concerns with Palestinian attempts to prompt an investigation of Israel by the International Criminal Court.

The Palestinian Central Council convened in August and ratified the continued severance of political relations with the United States until the latter revisits its decision regarding Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and settlements.

On 5 September, the Government of Paraguay announced that it would reverse the previous decision from May to relocate its Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and move it back to Tel Aviv.

Since the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in July, the United Nations has led an unprecedented effort with the Governments of Egypt, Israel and other international partners to prevent another outbreak of hostilities, respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs and support the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza, a crucial element in any political effort to resolve the wider conflict.

The United Nations has enhanced its capacity in Gaza to work with the Palestinian Government and Israeli counterparts to support donor implementation on all issues related to the Gaza Reconstruction

Mechanism and provide accountable and transparent reporting to donors.

The World Bank has increased its allocation from $55 million to $90 million for the West Bank and Gaza over the next year, part of which will be used to create approximately 4,400 short-term employment opportunities. The United Nations Development Programme has also accelerated its emergency economic assistance programme, with support from several donors.

I would now like to share some broad observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

First, the expansion of Israeli settlements remains illegal under international law and continues to erode the viability of a two-State solution. Particularly alarming are legal and administrative steps that could consolidate and expand settlement activity deep in the West Bank, further undermining the contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

The persistent threat of demolitions and displacement of Palestinians in Area C, including in Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al- Helu, is of great concern. The 5 September decision of the High Court of Justice places the Bedouin community at imminent risk of demolition. Demolitions undermine the prospects for a two-State solution and are also in violation of international law.

Violence, terror and the risk of conflict in Gaza remain an obstacle to peace. I welcome the calm since 9 August, but I am very concerned by consistent attempts to undermine it. All sides — and I underline all — must continue their positive engagement with Egypt and the United Nations and do their part. Hamas and other armed militant groups must stop all provocations and attacks. Israel must improve the movement and access regime for Gaza. The Palestinian Authority must remain engaged in Gaza. The international community must address the urgent humanitarian needs. And, finally, Fatah and Hamas must engage in earnest with Egypt in order to bring back the legitimate Government to Gaza.

I once again call for all violent actions, which continue to endanger the lives of both Israelis and Palestinians, to stop immediately. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law. I urge Hamas and other Palestinian militants to end the indiscriminate firing of rockets into southern Israel.

I reiterate that Israeli security forces have a responsibility to exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire and must not resort to lethal force unless in response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury. The continued use of live fire by the Israeli Defense Forces is deeply concerning. The killing of children is absolutely unacceptable.

I call on the international community to join the United Nations in condemning violence and incitement, which continue to fuel a climate of mutual fear and mistrust while hindering efforts to bridge the gaps between both sides.

As explicitly outlined in the 2016 report of the Middle East Quartet (S/2016/595, annex), current trends are imperilling the viability of the two-State solution. There has been no positive movement by the parties to take steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground. By complying with their obligations under previous agreements and the relevant United Nations resolutions, the parties can, and must, reverse the current course.

Israel should make progress on the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority of powers and responsibilities in Area C, on improving Palestinian economic prospects, as well as access to housing, water, energy, communications, agriculture, and natural resources, and on significantly easing Palestinian movement restrictions.

The United Nations has been working tirelessly to address the deepening humanitarian and economic crisis on the ground. Support for emergency fuel is urgently needed to avoid a total collapse of critical services in hospitals and sewage treatment. The Deputy Special Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick, made two emergency appeals to donors in August for new funding, and I reiterate the urgency of his calls. It is also critical that UNRWA be able to continue to deliver its vital services.

In addition, the United Nations is working with several donors to advance key interventions that will immediately improve the situation on the ground, both in Gaza and the West Bank. I urge donors to consider support for those activities, which play a vital role in preventing further escalation.

Twenty-five years have now passed since the signing of the Oslo Accords. It was a historic moment that captured the world's attention and filled Palestinians, Israelis and the region with hope that genuine peace

could be realized. Sadly, that courageous vision of lasting peace now lies in tatters.

We must restore that hope. There is an alternative to this perpetual cycle of violence. We must overcome the current impasse and refocus our efforts on ultimately returning to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation and bring about a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — a resolution based on two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, based on the 1967 lines and in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements. I urge all sides to continue to engage with each other and with the international community to preserve and advance its achievement.

Finally, let underline today that the urgency of the situation that we face on the ground is really desperate. Gaza could explode at any minute. We have a humanitarian responsibility to react. But we must also understand that it cannot be solved on the basis of humanitarian action alone. It must be solved with a political perspective to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have a responsibility to support the parties in this prospect.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I want to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing to the Security Council on resolution 2334 (2016) and for his daily commitment, as well as that of his team.

In Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, every passing day increases, bit by bit, the despair by reflecting a three-pronged reality. First, the false status quo actually covers up the daily deterioration on the ground. Secondly, the situation could, at any moment, degenerate into an full-blown crisis, as has been the case in Gaza for many long months. Finally, when peace prospects diminish on the ground, they also diminish in hearts, minds and words. It is that vicious cycle that is at play today. Generation after generation of Palestinians and Israelis are losing hope in a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

A quarter century, nearly to the date, has elapsed since the Oslo Accords were signed in Washington, D.C. Twenty-five years after Oslo, nearly three quarters of Palestinians, according to opinion polls, believe that their situation has deteriorated. Barely half of them still believe in a two-State solution.

Nevertheless, the observation that we consistently make in the Council remains valid. No viable alternative to the two-State solution has emerged since Oslo. The unique territorial structure that seems to take form before our eyes under the effects of the settlement policies will ultimately lead to the coexistence of two unequal classes of citizens on one territory. For Palestinians it would mark the abandonment of their aspirations to statehood, and for the Israelis the end of their democratic project. While it is essential to fill the current political vacuum, a peace plan not based on the internationally agreed parameters of two States would be doomed to failure. It is therefore essential that all negotiations take place within that framework, which in turn is based on international law and the relevant resolutions of the Council, including resolution 478 (1980), on Jerusalem, as well as resolution 2334 (2018), which brings us here today.

With regard to the latter resolution, 10 members of the Council, including France, requested that, in accordance with the established practice, written reports be submitted to the Council. We thank the Secretariat for the circulation of a written report last June (S/2018/614), and we encourage the continuation of that practice.

Today I would like to emphasize two points: the Israeli settlement policy in Area C and Jerusalem, which now threatens to irreversibly undermine the two-State solution — and I would refer to the risk of the imminent demolition of the village of Khan Al-Ahmar — and the situation in Gaza, which may at any time lead to an escalation in violence.

According to the judgement of the Supreme Court of Israel on 5 September, the decision to demolish the village of Khan Al-Ahmar is now entirely up to the Israeli Government. That decision, which has been in force since 12 September, can be implemented at any time. France, in conjunction with several of its European partners, has expressed its deep concern over that and calls on the Israeli authorities not to proceed with the demolition. The demolition of that Bedouin village, which would include the forced displacement

of its inhabitants, would contravene international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the resolutions of the Council. Several structures that have received European funding, including one school, are being directly targeted. Two hundred and thirty inhabitants, including nearly 160 children, are being threatened with deportation.

In addition to its humanitarian consequences, the demolition would be disastrous, and probably irreversible, to the political landscape. It would pave the way for the settlement of the so-called E-1 area, which is of strategic importance for the two-State solution. It would separate the north and south of the West Bank and isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian territories. By destroying the continuity of the Palestinian territories, it would make it impossible for the two States to reach a solution, with a strategy of de facto annexation of the West Bank by Israel in its place. That would represent a significant responsibility, historically and for both peoples.

Secondly, the erosion of the two-State solution as a consequence of settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the West Bank must not make us forget the imminent risks facing Gaza. For the past six months, there has been a succession of violence in Gaza, against the backdrop of a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented severity. In the face of the terrible record of successive demonstrations along the separation barrier, France condemned the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force and called on Israel to respect the right of Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully. We have also denounced the instrumentalization of demonstrations by Hamas and other armed groups. Finally, we condemned the firing of rockets and the use of incendiary devices directed at Israeli territory, as well as the construction of offensive tunnels by Hamas.

On several occasions in recent months, the Gaza Strip has found itself on the brink of a new armed conflict, as it experienced three times in the past decade. Each time, the worst was avoided, thanks in particular to the efforts of Egypt, which we especially welcome, and to the mediation work of Nickolay Maldenov, for which I am also grateful. But we know that, if the current situation persists, a large-scale escalation cannot be avoided indefinitely. It is then the people of Gaza who will once again pay the price. We must do everything we can to avoid it. It is up to the Council to speak with a strong voice to prevent an escalation. The silence it has observed since the beginning of the crisis is, every day, more deafening and, to be honest, incomprehensible.

Beyond an immediate de-escalation and respect for the 2014 ceasefire, there will be no lasting solution in Gaza without inter-Palestinian reconciliation within the framework of the Palestinian Liberation Organization principles and without restoring the prerogatives of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. In that regard, we welcome the relaunching of the process begun in Cairo almost a year ago, which must be followed by a genuine commitment by the Palestinian Authority to improve the living conditions of the people in Gaza. Above all, only lifting the blockade, with the necessary security guarantees for Israel, will make it possible to meet the needs of the population.

In parallel with those efforts, we must give our full support to the Special Coordinator's proposals for the accelerated implementation of priority projects. We will have an opportunity to discuss that in more detail next week at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians meeting in New York. Those projects must be accompanied by quick-impact humanitarian measures, necessary to meet the immediate needs of the population and prevent further escalation.

In the same spirit, unprecedented international mobilization is needed to enable the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue its essential activities and keep its schools open, without interruption, in Gaza and throughout the region. We will have an opportunity to call for such collective mobilization during the week of high-level meetings during the General Assembly. The stakes are high for the populations concerned, of course, but no less so for regional stability. In that context, we call on the United States to maintain its historic commitment to refugees and the Palestinian territories, with the necessary engagement of the international community.

France is a friend to both the Israelis and the Palestinians. It has no other interest than peace in the region and the possibility for the populations concerned to live in safety and dignity. As we all know, the destinies of Israelis and Palestinians are intertwined: neither of the two peoples will achieve their national aspirations in a sustainable way at the expense of the other. Twenty five years after the Oslo Accords, and in a context of increasing regional crisis, the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict has not lost any of its gravity, centrality and symbolic significance. The international community cannot turn away from it.

It is in that spirit that the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, will meet tomorrow in Paris with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. In that same spirit, there will be an exchange with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, next week on the sidelines of the General Assembly. France's conviction is that our shared compass, more than ever, needs to be implementation, through negotiation, of a two-State solution — the only way to achieve just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. France will spare no effort in that regard.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Coordinator once again for his briefing and for the work that he is doing to improve the situation and bring it closer to peace, as well as for all the hard work of his teams on the ground.

The United Kingdom remains committed to achieving a two-State solution, leading to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. We continue to believe that the best way to achieve that is through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and for all parties to focus on steps that are conducive to peace. As the French Ambassador said, some 25 years ago we concluded the Oslo Accords. It is doubly concerning, therefore, to see the recent developments on the ground on key aspects of resolution 2334 (2016). The level and rhetoric of hatred in dehumanization on all sides is repellent, and also dangerous.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the Israeli authorities' planned demolition of the village of Khan Al-Ahmar, which is located in an area of strategic importance for the contiguity of a Palestinian State. Its demolition threatens a major blow to the prospects for a two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the shared capital, by paving the way for settlement building in Area E-1. The United Nations has said that demolition could amount to forcible transfer in violation of international humanitarian law. The recent decision of the Israeli Supreme Court does not mandate demolition. Demolition remains at the discretion of the Israeli Government. We therefore call on the Israeli Government, once again, not to go ahead with its plan to demolish the village, including the school, and displace the residents.

I share concerns about the situation at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is facing severe financial pressure at a time of increased demand. We support a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement of Palestinian refugees. Until that point we remain firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We are concerned about the impact the recent United States decision on funding. We believe UNRWA is a lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We have ourselves so far provided approximately $67 million to UNRWA, $59 million to its core services and $7.8 million in humanitarian aid in Syria. We hope that will help meet immediate needs and that programmes and services can remain uninterrupted. We call on the international community and other donors to follow that and step up support to UNRWA to ensure its vital services are not interrupted. At the same time, I would like to stress that, for UNRWA to have a sustainable future, it needs to continue to promote realistic and technical cost-saving reforms. The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with UNRWA and donors on how best to ensure the continuity of essential services to Palestinian refugees at this time.

Lastly, and as the French Ambassador said, there is an urgent need to address the awful and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The United Kingdom recently announced a new $49 million programme to support economic development in Gaza and in the West Bank. We have released $2.6 million to UNICEF to help provide up to 1 million Gazans with access to clean water and sanitation, and we have given $2 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross appeal to support emergency medical needs. We are supportive of efforts to reduce the conflict in Gaza. It is in everyone's interest that peace and stability prevail in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories. We fully support the efforts of the Special Coordinator to improve the situation in Gaza, and we urge the relevant parties to engage fully with his proposals.

We also would like to see progress on humanitarian and economic proposals at next week's meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, and we call upon both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to deliver on their outstanding commitments. We reiterate

the need for Israel to reduce its movement and access restrictions on the people of Gaza, and for Hamas to commit to non-violence and fully end its attacks on Israel.

In order to see a long-term improvement in Gaza, momentum around Fatah-Hamas reconciliation needs to be maintained. The United Kingdom is supportive of Egyptian efforts to enable the Palestinian authority to resume control of Gaza. And we encourage all parties to engage constructively. The recent deaths on both sides of the conflict, including the deaths of three Palestinians in Gaza over the past week and the stabbing of an Israeli in a settlement on 16 September, reflect the need for progress to end the cycle of violence. We strongly urge all the relevant parties to respect international law, de-escalate tensions, exercise restraint and prevent occurrences that could jeopardize the lives of Palestinians and Israelis.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special representative Mladenov for his substantive briefing on the Middle East settlement.

Today's meeting is taking place on a landmark day for the history of the peace process in the Middle East. Forty years ago, the Camp David Agreements were arrived at. Twenty-five years ago, the Oslo Accords were struck. Those components, alongside other parameters agreed upon by the international community, have comprised the bedrock of a political process that was also enriched by important Security Council resolutions, the Madrid guiding principles, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the road map of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators on the Middle East settlement.

At the heart of this international legal basis is the two-State solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the implementation of which is contingent upon the need for agreement to be reached on all final-status issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, borders and security, through direct dialogue between Israelis and the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, those landmark dates arrived amid troubling developments in Middle-East policy. Indicators are increasingly pointing to an aspiration to undermine what has been developed, including with the participation of the United States, namely, the platform for a settlement. How else can one regard and view the recent decision taken by Washington to close the Palestine Liberation Organization office in the United States capital? We genuinely fail to understand the withdrawal of financing for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the recent refusal to continue to facilitate the operation of two hospitals in East Jerusalem. Bilateral commitments have collapsed. Even important security-related cooperation is under threat. Such measures do major damage to collective efforts to arrive at a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli settlement in the Middle East.

There is still time to rescind the decisions taken. We see the response in the revision of the current approaches, which have grave consequences for the prospects of the peace process, and a return to the roots of settlement. There needs to be an emphasis on rekindling international cooperation in the spirit of Russian-United States co-sponsorship, as well as of the Madrid process. That of course led to the establishment of the Middle East Quartet, which, as we see it, is the most effective mechanism and which was approved by the Security Council. It is necessary to revitalize work to launch direct Palestinian-Israeli dialogue. In that connection, what remains relevant is our initiative to organize in Moscow a personal meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. It is necessary to reverse existing trends, which are a consequence of unilateral decisions. I am referring to the cessation of settlement activities by Israel in the occupied territory, inflammatory rhetoric and violence on the part of both sides. Of course, one cannot overlook humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, above all in the Gaza strip. At the same time, we proceed from the premise that robust assistance to Gaza needs to dovetail with rebuilding unity among the Palestinian ranks.

We would note the important work carried out by the United Nations, specifically UNRWA, in the occupied Palestinian territories and in refugee camps. We welcome and support the inclusion of regional players in Middle East settlement. We note, and highly value, the role of Egypt and Jordan in Palestinian affairs. Russia's position on a Middle East settlement was and remains principled and consistent. We firmly believe that a fair solution to the Palestinian issue is of key significance to remedy the situation throughout the region. A pursuit of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, on the contrary, will constantly poison the overall international atmosphere, will have a detrimental effect on efforts to resolve other regional crises and will fuel terrorism. We would particularly draw attention to the importance of improving relations within the Arab

family. We are interested in a united and potent League of Arab States where all disputes are resolved on the basis of mutually respectful dialogue. We advocate the revival of multilateral efforts on Middle-East issues as a whole. We propose that colleagues thoroughly consider our vision to establish confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf, which eventually should lead to the establishment of a pan-regional security architecture. That is important not only to resolve the crises in Syria, Yemen and Libya but also to prevent potential conflicts.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting. We are grateful to Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his detailed briefing this afternoon, which draws attention to the tragic situation in Gaza.

We would like to emphasize three points that we believe need urgent attention.

First is putting an end to the settlement, demolition and eviction practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. Peru regrets and notes with concern the continuation of such practices, which are contrary to international law, seriously jeopardize the territorial integrity of the Palestinian State and undermine the possibility of reaching a political solution. We are particularly concerned about the humanitarian impact that would arise from the demolition of a group of structures in the village of Khan Al-Ahmar, which, as Mr. Mladenov mentioned, houses a community of 181 Palestinians, more than half of whom are minors. Such practices must cease, in strict compliance with the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, in particular resolution 2334 (2016).

My second point is that we believe that it is important to reverse the deteriorating humanitarian situation. We note with dismay the profound and ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, exacerbated by the recent incidents of violence and the cuts in the funding of assistance programmes. In order to overcome that reality, we believe that it is essential to address the lack of basic goods and services, as well as the blockade to which millions of Palestinians are subjected and which provides an ideal setting for those who promote violence and extremism. In that regard, we welcome the fact that the Special Envoy and his team have identified specific infrastructure and development projects in Gaza.

We also believe that it is essential to advance the process of intra-Palestinian reconciliation and that the agreement reached last October under the auspices of Egypt be reflected in concrete actions and results. We believe that that should make it possible for the legitimate Palestinian Authority to regain effective control of Gaza and should facilitate the resumption of direct negotiations with Israel.

We must also reiterate the need to provide the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East with steady and predictable funding and to mobilize to that end the solidarity of the international community, in particular the countries with the greatest resources and those committed to peace and stability in the region.

Lastly, my third point is that we believe that it is important to end the violence and to commit to achieving a political agreement. We regret the fact that the parties continue their hostile positions. Peru condemns the indiscriminate violence of Hamas, the disproportionate Israeli responses and the rhetoric of confrontation on the part of both sides. We emphasize the importance and the urgency of having a minimum level of understanding to assist in the reversal of the negative trends on the ground and in the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties, all with a view to achieving the only viable solution: two States coexisting with secure and mutually recognized borders.

I would like to conclude by commending the presentation last June, in written form, of the quarterly report (S/2018/614) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which was requested of the Secretary-General by 10 members of the Security Council (see S/2018/454). We hope to have a new written report in December in order to lend greater transparency to the treatment of this delicate issue.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

The question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East issue and is fundamental to peace in the region. The recent developments in Palestine and Israel are deeply troubling. The prospects for a two-State solution remain elusive, since the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks faces difficulties and the settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian properties continue unabated.

The situation in the Gaza Strip remains fragile, marred by the ongoing casualties among Palestinian

civilians. As a result of the violent clashes, the risk of the conflict escalating can hardly be ignored. Given the current dire situation, the international community needs to step up its efforts to promote a political solution to the Palestinian question. The Security Council in particular should take the lead and set an example.

First, the international community should uphold the two-State solution, which represents the right direction to resolve the Palestinian issue. The international community should increase its political and diplomatic efforts on the basis of the United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is imperative to effectively implement the Security Council resolutions, cease all settlement activities, stop the demolition of Palestinian properties, including Bedouin villages, immediately lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and take steps to prevent violence against civilians.

Secondly, the international community should remain united in a concerted effort to promote the early resumption of the peace talks between Palestine and Israel. All the parties concerned should narrow their differences, fully engage in dialogue and consultation and avoid any unilateral action that may exacerbate the situation so as to create the necessary environment for the resumption of dialogue. The international community should work together to find a viable way forward to overcome the current stalemate. Those that have considerable influence on the Middle East in particular should play a constructive role in that regard.

Thirdly, sensitive issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, should be properly addressed. The issue of the status of Jerusalem is complex and delicate. All parties should prioritize peace and calm in the region and act with caution to avoid triggering new regional disputes. All parties should respect the historical plurality, uphold fairness and justice, implement international consensus, strive for peaceful coexistence and act upon the relevant United Nations resolutions and the international consensus so as to reach a negotiated settlement that accommodates the interests of all the parties.

The international community should not forget the more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. For more than six decades, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has played an important role in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and in promoting regional peace and stability. The Agency currently faces many challenges, including a lack of funding. We appreciate the increased contributions of the relevant parties to the Agency and call on all the parties to provide additional and steady support to the Agency and to the countries hosting Palestinian refugees in order to alleviate the pressure on refugee relief efforts. For the past 30 years and more, China has made annual financial contributions to the Agency. This year, in the light of the urgent needs of the Agency, we have increased our contribution accordingly. China will continue to provide the best possible support to the Agency for the discharge of its mandate.

China firmly supports the Palestinian people in establishing a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support the greater integration of Palestine into the community of nations. China will continue to play a constructive role in promoting the Middle East peace process in line with the four-point proposal set out by Chinese President Xi Jinping to resolve the Palestinian question.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his clear briefing today. I also thank him for his reminder about the urgency and volatility of the situation on the ground and about the fact that, 25 years after the historic Oslo Accords, we need to have a serious and frank discussion about the obstacles to peace and threats to the two-State solution, which represents international consensus. I would like to address three elements of resolution 2334 (2016): settlements, violence and differentiation.

The Israeli settlement policy continues unabated despite repeated international condemnation. During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities announced plans and tenders for thousands of new settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, while Palestinian homes are being demolished and people are at risk of being forcibly transferred. We second the calls from both the United Nations and the European Union (EU) to the Israeli authorities to reconsider their decision to demolish the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar in area E-1. It would have serious consequences for its residents, the majority of whom are children, as well as for the contiguity of the Palestinian State and Palestinian access to East Jerusalem. Israel's settlement policy is illegal under international law, as are actions

taken in that context, including the demolitions of Palestinian communities and possible forced transfers of the population. The policy undermines prospects for peace and the viability of the two-State solution. We therefore urge the Israeli authorities to reconsider and reverse those policies.

We call for steps to prevent acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terrorism, provocation and destruction. In line with resolution 2334 (2016) and well-established EU policy, we call for the distinction between Israel within pre-1967 borders and occupied territory. As is obvious from the Special Coordinator's briefing today, progress on implementing that part of resolution 2334 (2016) is lacking. We urge all States to act in that regard.

Since our previous meeting, in August (see S/PV.8239), we welcome the fact that the situation in and around Gaza has stabilized somewhat thanks to international efforts, not least by the Special Coordinator and Egypt. But, as we heard, the situation remains tense and fragile and, for the sake of long-term stability, we underline the importance of all relevant parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, taking part in such efforts. While another devastating conflict between Israel and Hamas may have been averted, it is imperative to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Interventions with quick, direct and immediate impact on daily lives are possible and urgently needed for the population in Gaza living under dire circumstances. We look forward to discussing that issue in greater detail at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians next week, but let me underline that it is crucial to see a lifting of the Israeli closure regime, an end to acts of violence and acts of provocation, progress in intra-Palestinian reconciliation and a return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza.

We are all aware that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a critical role on the ground. It provides education, health and other essential services to Palestine refugees, but it also constitutes a key factor for stability in the region, including in neighbouring countries, until the final-status issue on refugees has been settled. We therefore regret the decision of the United States not to provide further funding to UNRWA after decades of political and financial support. The United States has traditionally been the largest donor, and its support has been much appreciated. That decision has contributed to a serious financial crisis at UNRWA, with a current funding shortfall of $186 million. A few weeks ago, UNRWA schools for more than half a million Palestinian children were opened. However, the Agency's funding beyond September is not secured. The remaining financial gap needs to be filled for schools to remain open.

Sweden is among the top donors to UNRWA. In August we signed a multiannual partnership agreement worth over $200 million. We are fully committed to supporting UNRWA at this critical juncture. Together with our partners, including Jordan, whose commitment to UNRWA we commend, we have sought to mobilize political and financial support over recent months. We will also use the occasion of the high-level week of the General Assembly to that end. We call on all countries to step up support, since the shortfall is unprecedented and, as mentioned, risks spurring instability and violent radicalization in both Gaza and the wider region.

Unfortunately, the Oslo Accords did not bring about the peace that both Israelis and Palestinians deserve. We reaffirm our support for an end to the occupation and for the two-State solution, based on international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements. There simply is no viable alternative to the two-State solution, which is the only way the legitimate aspirations of both peoples can be attained. Yet, as we have heard today, that goal is becoming increasingly distant by the day. We therefore need to redouble our collective efforts to salvage the two-State solution. The international community and regional stakeholders have a key role to play in revitalizing meaningful peace negotiations, which require the full participation of women. The Council, too, has a role to play, as it did when resolution 2334 (2016) was adopted.

We often speak in the Chamber about how important it is that the decisions of the Council be respected. That is why we are gravely concerned about the clear lack of implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and why we were surprised that no report of the Secretary-General was circulated prior to today's meeting. We recall that the provision of written reports is standard practice in the Council, as stipulated by presidntial note S/2017/507. A report was circulated in June (S/2018/614), in line with the request made by 10 members of the Council. We encourage the continuance of that practice and look forward to receiving a written report for the next quarterly reporting period.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his very comprehensive briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

Twenty-five years ago, the first Oslo Accord was signed. Despite its many shortcomings, the agreement represented a historic compromise. Unfortunately, since then the conflict has not seen significant positive moves towards achieving peace. On the contrary, we have seen that the recent security situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory has become more tense. Many times over the past couple of weeks, we have expressed great concern about the tragic loss of civilian lives on both sides. We have appealed to Israel to use proportionate force. We have also called on the Palestinians to stop indiscriminate and deliberate rocket firings from Gaza to Israel and to refrain from causing fires by launching incendiary kites and balloons.

Let me again underline that all sides must fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. Recent developments on the ground clearly point to an urgent need to continue the de-escalation process. We believe that a negotiated two-State solution and the resolution of all final-status issues, including Jerusalem, settlements, Palestinian refugees, borders and security arrangements, remain a realistic way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties and achieve long-term peace.

We should strengthen cooperation with the countries of the region, especially Egypt and Jordan, which would have a real impact on the de-escalation of tensions in Israeli-Palestinian relations. We appeal to both sides to refrain from unilateral steps that prejudge the outcome of final-status negotiations and expect them to demonstrate, through their actions and policies, their commitment to peace. In more general terms, let me underline that Poland supports a two-State solution under which the national aspirations of both parties to the conflict would be met, including the Palestinian right to self-determination and independence, as well as the Israeli right to ensure its security and the normalization of relations with Arab States.

Unfortunately, so far we have not seen any significant positive moves towards achieving that goal. The situation in the Gaza Strip is extremely worrisome. There is a lack of progress in political, security and humanitarian processes in Gaza. The prevailing lack of decisive steps towards the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza, despite Egypt's best efforts to revive the process, is detrimental to Palestinian aspirations to statehood, contributes to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis and risks escalation. Undoubtedly, progress in the Palestinian reconciliation process would contribute to improving the situation on the ground.

Unfortunately, provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric continue on both sides. In our opinion, such acts constitute a significant obstacle to the reactivation of the peace process. It must also be stated that, as a result of such incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, we have observed an increased number of dangerous incidents, some of which involve children, who should be particularly protected.

While we are on the subject of youth, we are deeply concerned by the deteriorating financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. A lack of hope and real perspectives for young generations — especially in Gaza — could very easily be exploited by inflammatory rhetoric. The effects of reducing this support can have serious security and humanitarian consequences, not only in the Palestinian territories but also in other countries hosting refugees. The Agency already faces a great challenge in upholding its mandate to preserve its key services like education and health care. In the absence of a lasting political solution, the international community cannot abdicate its responsibility and duty towards the Palestinian refugees to ensure the continuation of the Agency's work on a sound financial basis.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the long-standing European Union position that all settlement activity is illegal under international law and continues to undermine the practical prospects and hopes for peace. In this context, I also wish to reiterate the call issued by the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for plans to demolish Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu to be cancelled. Not only is the community at imminent risk of demolition and displacement, but such a move would also set a significant precedent that may affect other Bedouin communities in Area C.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Mr. Nikolay Mladenov for the information he has provided today.

I would like to begin my statement by expressing our concern at the fact that a written report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) was not circulated, although it had been requested by 10 members of the Council in a letter dated 14 May and was acted upon in June, when the report was distributed in good time. I thank the Secretary-General for having acceded to our request at that time, and we reiterate that this should be a recurring practice for all reports. We stress the importance of having written reports provided to delegations because it allows us to have first-hand information relating to the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities, which is critical to safeguarding the two-State solution in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016).

Unfortunately, the Government of Israel continues to demonstrate its disdain for the resolutions adopted by the Security Council. Its administrative and legal acts continue to dangerously foment negative trends on the ground and are used as justification by the security forces to take part in violent action against the Palestinian people and their property.As we were informed today by Mr. Mladenov, under the pretext of an absence of building permits, the Government of Israel has demolished or confiscated 25 structures belonging to Palestinian families in Area C and in East Jerusalem. As a result of this arbitrary action, 47 people — including 23 children — have been displaced and the livelihoods of 108 civilians seriously affected.

My delegation forcefully rejects the deadly attacks of the Israeli armed forces on the Palestinian civilian population, including those reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its report on the protection of civilians. In the report, OCHA details the murder by the Israeli army of three Palestinians, including two children, with 666 wounded between 28 August and 10 September as a result of the use of live fire. The report also details a total of 50 Palestinian casualties during the attempt of 10 boats to set sail from Gaza to break the Israeli naval blockade as part of the so-called Great March of Return. These incidents culmminated in the ships being impounded by the Israeli navy and, as usual, the use of lethal weapons of war and tear gas.

We are concerned about the dreadful unemployment among Palestinians in the occupied territories. The unemployment rate is 27 per cent — the highest in the world, according to a report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which also warns that the impact is higher on women and young people.

We also categorically reject the politicization of humanitarian assistance engaged in by some Member States as they withdraw their economic support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), justifying their decision by claiming that the school, health and assistance services provided by the Agency are wanting. Bolivia offers its warmest commendation to UNRWA for its humanitarian work in assisting the more than 5.4 million Palestinian men and women who find themselves refugees in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Given this priority need, we call on the States Members of the Organization to continue making their valuable economic contributions to the Agency in the understanding that the current crisis has the sole effect of worsening of the quality of life for all Palestinian refugees.

As on other occasions, Bolivia expresses its firm commitment to all international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation and, in this regard, endorses such initiatives as the Quartet road map, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and others that guarantee just and lasting peace so that both peoples are able to live within internationally recognized and secure borders.

Bolivia is convinced that the only long-term option for resolving this occupation is the two-State solution, ultimately leading to a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 international borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his valuable and comprehensive briefing today, and for reminding the Security Council and the international community of the dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. We underline once again the State of Kuwait's full support for his concerted efforts to achieve lasting, fair and comprehensive peace for the Palestinian people. This repercussions of this long-standing problem have been aggravated on a daily basis and affected the people who have suffered the hardship of occupation for over five decades.

> "If new funds are not received immediately, we will be facing a potentially catastrophic breakdown

> in essential service delivery... Services provided at hospitals, clinics, as well as sewage treatment, water and sanitation facilities will cease... Hospitals in the Gaza Strip only have enough fuel to support service provision just over two weeks, in total, with some facilities at greater risk... putting the lives of over 500 vulnerable patients at risk each day. These include patients being treated in intensive care; new-born babies in neonatal units; patients requiring emergency surgery."

Those are the words of Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, who appealed to the world and the donor community to prevent a new catastrophe; this time, a health catastrophe for the people of Gaza. It is no exaggeration to warn that just a few weeks separate Gaza from a catastrophic collapse in basic humanitarian services, according to Mr. Mladenov. That must cause us to redouble our efforts to protect civilians and avoid this dark scenario by compelling Israel to respect and implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, while stopping all its illegal and illegitimate practices.

Yesterday, our appeals were aimed at averting the emergence of a humanitarian crisis due to the closure of the vital Karam Abu Salem crossing by Israel, the occupying Power. Today, the Palestinian people continue to face multiple challenges. Numbers and statistics do not lie. More than 4,800 patients in the Gaza Strip are dire daily need of basic health care.

Mr. Mladenov's briefing tells us once again that the situation in Gaza is still on the brink of the abyss, especially after the fall of a number of martyrs and wounded. Three Palestinian citizens, including a 12-year-old boy, were recently killed in addition to 248 citizens injured, 80 of them were hit by live bullets. That raises the number to 180 people who have been killed since the beginning of the peaceful Great March of Return on 30 March. We strongly condemn these systematic Israeli crimes against unarmedPalestinian civilians, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

In addition, the occupying authorities have given orders for bulldozers and demolition machines to begin moving towards the Al-Khan Al-Ahmar area after the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the petition filed by the Bedouin community of that area. This act threatens to displace 80 Palestinian families, which means about 190 persons, of whom 53 per cent are children. The reason for that is to implement the so-called Greater Jerusalem Project, including the settlement project called E-1, to vacate the area of all Palestinian presence, separate the southern West Bank from the centre and isolate the occupied city of Jerusalem from the West Bank. That constitutes a serious violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, while undermining the efforts towards a two-State solution.

In that regard, we reiterate our demand that the Israeli occupation Power be obliged to respect and implement resolution 2334 (2016), which underscored that Israeli settlements constitute a flagrant violation of international law and an obstacle to peace. We welcome the first written report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/614), which was issued in June, on the implementation of that resolution. We regret that no such report was issued this month, and we look forward to the issuance of periodic written reports regarding the implementation of that resolution starting in December in response to a request by 10 States members of the Council, and in line with the established practice and the note by the President S/2017/507.

Unfortunately, the basic services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to more than 5 million registered Palestinian refugees are facing great pressure as a result of the severe financial crisis of the Agency. We had believed that its previous financial crisis could not get any worse, but today we find that these challenges have doubled and now pose a direct threat to those refugees as a result of UNRWA's fiscal deficit. We urge donor countries to continue to provide the necessary and sustainable financial support for the Agency's programmes and activities. Funding the Agency is the responsibility of the international community and its burden cannot be borne by specific States. However, the total amount provided by the State of Kuwait has exceeded $70 million in the past four years alone. We will maintain this support alongside many other countries.

The special session of the Council of the League of Arab States, which was held at the ministerial level on 12 September to discuss the UNRWA crisis, fully supported the mandate given to the Agency under General Assembly resolution 302 (IV). It rejected attempts to end or reduce the role and mandate of the Agency through systematic campaigns against it. It called on the international community to commit itself

to the Agency mandate and to ensure resources and financial contributions to its budget and activities in a sustainable manner so that it can continue to play its role in providing basic services to the victims of the Nakba. That is a right which the international community has a responsibility to fulfil, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

Unfortunately, there is once again overriding tension in Jerusalem due to the provocative incursions launched by extremist settler groups in the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, covered by Israeli occupying forces, which have released tear gas on civilians and detained dozens of worshippers and Mosque guards, as well as removing officials from the Islamic Endowments Department. We renew our rejection and condemnation of any Israeli violation of holy sites, especially attempts to change the historical and legal status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque or to partition it, and to undermine the freedom of Muslim prayers therein. In that regard, we commend the decision of the Government of Paraguay to refrain from moving its Embassy to Jerusalem, in respect of international law and the relevant internationally legitimate resolutions.

In conclusion, what I have outlined is only a glimpse of the suffering of the unarmed Palestinian people; it is only a small part of the scourges facing our Palestinian brothers in the occupied territories. Most importantly, what I have outlined must stir our consciences and compel us to put an end to the injustices that the Palestinian people have suffered for decades. Everyone in the Council is all too aware that the Palestinian question is a top priority of every Muslim and Arab. There can be no lasting peace and security as long as the occupation continues. The resolutions of international legitimatcy, the Quartet road map, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative are the cornerstones of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Those would provide the Palestinian people with their legitimate political rights and the establishment of their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his briefing on the latest developments with regard to the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

We remain concerned that negative actions taken by the parties continue to stoke tensions in the region, and we are saddened by the deaths of innocent civilians. It is absolutely vital that the parties refrain from actions that do not contribute to making progress, but instead increase frustration and mistrust.

The security and humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to be a source of concern, and making every possible effort to avoid the worst is still a matter of priority. We hope that some of the events planned during the high-level week will help to mobilize the necessary international assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinians. We continue to support United Nations engagement, in close coordination with Egypt and all concerned parties, to address the situation in Gaza. Progress in the Egyptian-led reconciliation process is key, and the parties must be urged to cooperate for the sake of their own people, who have been suffering for far too long.

Finally, 25 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, peace in the Middle East and Palestine continues to elude us. The need to reinvigorate efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, lasting and just solution on the basis of the two-State formula is very clear. In that regard, facilitating the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties is vital. It is incumbent upon the Council to support such efforts for the sake of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians and peace in the broader Middle Eastern region.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the convening of this briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, whose briefing oriented us on the multiple and complex challenges to peace and stability in a region deeply affected by the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

Among the hotbeds of tension in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is undoubtedly the most complex crisis the international community has ever faced, having been unable to provide a definitive and universally acceptable response in 70 years. Côte d'Ivoire, which has always advocated dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes, regrets the lack of a consensual and viable framework for consultation since the deadlock in the Oslo Accords, which had raised hopes for a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. My country therefore reiterates its call on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to move beyond the current situation and to resume dialogue in order

to consolidate past gains and create the conditions conducive to the achievement of a just and lasting peace.

My country, which attaches as much importance to the security of the State of Israel as to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, reaffirms its strong support for the solution of two States peacefully coexisting within the 1967 borders. Côte d'Ivoire therefore encourages all parties to work for peace in order to put an end to the vicious cycle of violence. To that end, it calls for the extension of the current ceasefire and welcomes Israel's reopening of the Erez crossing.

In the current context, the resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians is not merely a necessity; it is above all a matter of urgency the resolution of which could help to contain the seeds of potential violence. That is why my country supports France's 15 January 2017 initiative, which led to the adoption by 70 States and international organizations of a joint declaration reaffirming the international community's commitment to the two-State solution. The declaration also calls for a settlement of the crisis based on the relevant Council resolutions.

On the humanitarian front, Côte d'Ivoire encourages donors to continue and increase initiatives to assist Palestinians in distress. In that regard, it welcomes Jordan's announcement to organize, on 27 September in New York, a conference to mobilize the financial support needed to maintain the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides assistance to 3 million Palestinians in need.

Côte d'Ivoire is convinced that peace is possible when it is supported by the courage and commitment of those who transcend the deepest divisions and hatred. We therefore hope that one day very soon, Israelis and Palestinians will be able to overcome their deep, but certainly surmountable divisions in order to engage in a fruitful dialogue with a view to achieving a lasting settlement based on the two-State solution to a conflict that has gone on for too long.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his very comprehensive and objective update on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We are closely following his negotiations with the key countries on this issue. In particular, we appreciate Mr. Mladenov's meetings with politicians of the Israeli, Palestinian and regional leadership, as well as Russian and European Union diplomats, in an attempt to restore calm and expand the range of humanitarian assistance provided to that troubled zone.

We echo the warnings of the United Nations that there is a cycle of conflicts in the Middle East that are a cause for serious concern. They are raising tensions at all levels and in numerous contexts, including the situations in Syria, Yemen and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

We have carefully followed the latest news on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). Since we too signed the letter of 14 May on the reporting on the implementation of that resolution, we note that no written report has been circulated for this meeting, as requested in our joint letter. We all welcomed the circulation of a written report on 14 June, and we believe that it is important to continue with the standard practice. We look forward to receiving a written report ahead of the next reporting period in December.

Kazakhstan calls on both sides to honour their respective commitments under all Security Council resolutions that have been adopted over the 50 years since 1967. The Council must ensure compliance with resolution 2334 (2016). We therefore call in particular for a complete freeze on the construction of settlements. The deliberate policy of demolishing Palestinian buildings and expanding settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, and the transfer of those lands for the exclusive use by one party, undermine the viability of the two-State solution.

In that regard, we are concerned by the intention of the Israeli authorities to demolish a Bedouin village that is home to a community of 181 people. Such actions undermine the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. At the same time, Kazakhstan is alarmed at the announcement by the Israeli Civil Administration of the plan to expand the illegal Israeli settlement of Tina Omarim in the town of Al-Dahriyeh, in the southern occupied West Bank district of Hebron. We call on the Israeli authorities to halt the demolition and stop efforts to resettle Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

With regard to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Kazakhstan reiterates the critical need of supporting that important entity in the light of its very significant work, especially since the situation in Gaza is desperate. Over a decade of blockade has deprived the people of their basic rights and left over two-thirds

of the population dependent on humanitarian aid. My country also underscores the importance of achieving intra-Palestinian unity. It is absolutely vital to bring all Palestinian factions together and to unite them under a legitimate and democratic Palestinian Authority. My delegation also appreciates the efforts of the Russian Federation and Egypt to ensure intra-Palestinian consolidation and urges all Palestinian political parties and movements to integrate into one national political structure.

Kazakhstan calls upon the Middle East Quartet — the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations — to revive the work of that international body. We believe that resuming the Quartet's indispensable negotiations on the Middle East settlement will help to consolidate multilateral efforts for a peaceful settlement of this conflict.

Lastly, we call upon the leaders of Israel, Palestine and all other involved parties to take concrete steps to preserve the possibility of peaceful coexistence and the solution of two States existing side by side. It should be based, as we always say in the Council, on the inalienable rights of Palestinians to statehood and Israel's right to security.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Mladenov for his overview of recent developments. It is a sobering list that underlines the urgent need for positive steps. We commend him and his team for their persistent efforts for peace. We also thank him for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

Let me refer to the letter that was sent to the Secretary-General in May, signed by 10 of the current Security Council members, in which we requested written reports on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We welcomed the written report we received in June and look forward to receiving written reports in the future.

I have three points to make: first, the anniversary of the first Oslo agreement; secondly, the threats to the two-State solution; and thirdly, the situation in Gaza.

First, I would like to look back at the 25 years since Oslo. On 13 September 1993, the first Oslo Accords were signed. The handshake between Rabin and Arafat was historic and it heralded a period in which peace could be achieved, or so we all anticipated or hoped. Much has been accomplished since then. The Palestinian Authority has been set up, a transfer of competences has taken place and the Palestinian institutions were judged to be ready to take on the responsibilities of a State. That is no small feat in such a short period.

However, the process remains incomplete. The transfer of responsibilities has stopped. The division between Gaza and the West Bank is entrenching itself further. Settlements continue to grow unabated. In 1993, it seemed difficult to have to resettle 100,000 settlers. But to resolve the current challenge of 600,000 settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a task of enormous proportions. In July and August, over 2,000 new housing units were announced by Israel. The Kingdom of the Netherlands condemns those decisions. The number of advanced housing units increased severely in the second quarter of 2018, compared to the first quarter of the year, and also compared to the same period in 2017. Settlements are illegal under international law, and that policy undermines the prospects for peace, as was also reconfirmed by the Council in resolution 2334 (2016).

The stalled peace process has led to disillusion and frustration over the past 25 years. Three-quarters of the Palestinian people believe that the situation today is worse than before the Oslo Accords. Among Israelis and Palestinians, support for the two-State solution is now below 50 per cent, yet nobody sees a better alternative. We are deeply worried by those trends and the lack of positive steps on either side that would help to reverse them.

Secondly, I turn my attention to the threats to the two-State solution. Nothing shows better why the trends must be reversed than their impact on the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. As others have said, the entire village of Khan Al-Ahmar is slated for demolition and eviction. We reiterate the call of the European Union on the Israeli Government to reconsider its plan to demolish the village, including its school, and displace its residents. Its demolition would have very serious consequences, both for the residents of that community, including its children, and for the prospects of the two-State solution.

The slated demolition does not stand on its own. For Palestinians, it is nearly impossible to obtain building permits. According to the United Nations, in 2016 over 16,000 demolition orders were pending against Palestinian buildings in Area C alone. At the same time, the Israeli settlements continue to grow.

Last weekend, an Israeli civilian was again stabbed to death. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly condemns such terrorist attacks. There is no excuse for terrorism.

Thirdly, I will speak on the situation in Gaza. The humanitarian situation there is getting worse by the day. We were close to a complete resumption of hostilities in the summer. We welcome the progress made towards calm, under the leadership of the United Nations and Egypt. However, the underlying issues remain unresolved, as Nickolay Mladenov again made clear today.

Unemployment has risen to over 50 per cent. Protests continue at the border, as sadly illustrated by yesterday's events, with more victims as a result. We call on all relevant parties to ensure that protests remain peaceful. We also urgently repeat our call upon Israel to ensure that its responses are proportionate and necessary at all times, in line with its obligations under international law. The high number of victims raises serious questions regarding the proportionality of the Israeli response.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports initiatives to improve living conditions in Gaza. Large-scale desalination projects in Gaza or connecting Gaza to natural gas can contribute substantially to improving the lives of people in Gaza. However, Gaza should not need to be a recipient of humanitarian aid. All sides must take steps to revive the economy, through, inter alia, a predictable opening of the crossings, while taking into account Israel's security needs.

The steps called for in resolution 1860 (2009) are still as relevant today as they were in 2009. In that regard, let me reiterate our support for the efforts of Mr. Mladenov. We call upon all sides to constructively engage in order to find a durable solution for many of the problems Gaza faces. In the absence of economic recovery, people are dependent on humanitarian aid.

We remain deeply concerned by the financial crisis of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We support it in its tremendous work for the most vulnerable people in Gaza and the other areas of operation. We welcome the additional funding by new and old partners of UNRWA. We commend UNRWA for its cost-saving measures and decision to open its schools, despite the uncertain situation.

In conclusion, I started by reflecting on the 25 years that have passed since Oslo. Nobody thought peace would be easy. We take hope from the fact that many times parties have come close to an agreement. We encourage the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships not to turn their backs to each other, but to continue on the complex road towards peace. Only they can decide the final status issues, and in our view all final status issues can be resolved if the political will exists.

We believe that the well-known parameters still hold the best framework for any resolution. First, there must be an agreement on the borders of the two States, based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. Secondly, security arrangements for the Palestinians must respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over; and for the Israelis, they must protect their security. The resurgence of terrorism must be prevented and security threats, including the new and vital threats in the region, must be addressed. Thirdly, a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question must be put in place. Fourthly, the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem must be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the team led by Mr. Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his clear and detailed briefing and, above all, for his unceasing effort to overcome the political impasse that the conflict has endured for many years.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council is meeting again today to address that conflict. Twenty-eight years after the Madrid Conference, peace is ever more distant. The path mapped out by the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords 25 years ago is almost in danger of becoming obsolete. We are faced with a very worrying dynamic of the exhaustion of hope in the negotiating process and of a gradual loss of confidence in the viability of the two-State solution. Furthermore, the reports that we have received from the region from the beginning of the conflict to the present day have continuously highlighted violence as a predominant and growing element.

History has demonstrated that the conflict does not have a military solution. The parties are fated to seek a solution through negotiations, which is why it is

important that they abstain from taking action that can aggravate the already complicated situation.

Over the past six months, we have witnessed violence unleashed on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip in clashes between Palestinian marchers and Israeli forces, including rocket attacks launched by insurgents from Gaza, which have been answered by strong attacks by the Israeli army. All those hostilities have resulted in more than 100 Palestinian deaths, many injuries and great material damage. Added to that, the total blockade imposed on Gaza has aggravated the existing humanitarian crisis. It is important for Israel to understand that it must end its policy of the demolition of Palestinian homes and use proportional force. There is urgent need for sustainable solution to the situation of the nearly 2 million people in that Palestinian enclave that guarantees a dignified life and greater protection for people on both sides.

The insurgency of certain sectors that are threatening the security of Israel from Gaza is a direct consequence of the absence of the Palestinian National Authority in the area. In that regard, my delegation wishes to express its concern over the failure to comply with the reconciliation pact signed by Hamas and Fatah of 12 October 2017 in Egypt, which provided — among other things — for the return last December of the Palestinian National Authority and its total control of that enclave. In that regard, we recommend more support for the initiative of Egypt and other actors to actively and definitively promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation, which is indispensable for the reorganization and security of Gaza. We wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Egyptian Government in that regard.

Of great concern to us is the current financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA), which must remain able to carry out its role and provide important services to the millions of Palestinians who depend on it. In that connection, we commend the recent pronouncements of the countries that have increased their support for UNRWA, and we urge the other members of the international community to join in that gesture of support for the displaced Palestinians.

Equatorial Guinea acknowledges the submission of written reports, which has been a practice of the Council. We hope that in this case, in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016) and in line with established practice, the next quarterly report will be provided in writing.

Finally, Equatorial Guinea agress with the international community that greater efforts are needed to resume meaningful negotiations aimed at achieving a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, which would meet Israeli and Palestinian needs for security and Palestinian aspirations to enjoy the status of a sovereign State, put an end to the occupation and resolve all final-status issues, putting an end to the conflict. Both parties have the same right to live with the guarantees of peace and security and must respect the various Security Council resolutions in that regard.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I have listened to my colleagues' statements this afternoon with great interest. I have always been open about my belief that this Middle East debate has been excessively and unfairly focused on Israel. Today, I will go one step further. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is serious and worthy of the Council's attention, but if there is one country that is the source of conflict and instability in the Middle East — one country that merits a quarterly debate in the Security Council — that country is not Israel. It is Iran.

For almost 40 years, the Iranian regime has existed outside the community of law-abiding nations. It is difficult to name a conflict in the Middle East that does not have Iran's fingerprints on it. The Iranian regime has backed dictators who gas their own people. It stokes conflict. It funds foreign fighters and terrorists. It transfers missiles to militants. It acts against the interests and policies of the Security Council time and time again. Across the Middle East, Iran has trampled on the sovereignty of its neighbours in Lebanon, in Syria and in Yemen, and the Iranian regime has shown a total disregard of the sovereignty of a country that is at a critical stage in its political development — Iraq.

Iran's leaders pretend that their interference in the sovereignty of other nations is done in the name of religious affiliation. They like to claim that they have been invited into the affairs of other countries. In fact, the motives of the mullahs are much less elevated. They are interested in power. In the case of Iraq, their goal is to exploit uncertainty in order to create an Iranian-

controlled corridor for weapons and fighters from Tehran to the Mediterranean.

In recent months, Iran's aggression has escalated. Iranian proxies in Iraq operate openly, with funding, training, and weapons supplied by Tehran. The Iranian regime has reportedly begun over the past few months to transfer ballistic missiles to those proxies in Iraq. It is reportedly developing the capability for its proxy militias to produce their own missiles inside of Iraq.

In a blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty, the Iranian regime recently fired a barrage of missiles from Iran into Iraq. Iran attacked the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, killing 11 people. This was an act not of Iranian proxies but of the Tehran regime itself. It was Iran's first direct military strike into Iraqi territory in over a decade. That Iranian interference in the sovereignty of Iraq should be of great interest to the Security Council for many reasons, not least of which is because it occurs in clear defiance of Security Council resolutions.

Iranian General and Head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force Qasem Soleimani is leading an effort to influence the composition of a new Iraqi Government. I remind my colleagues that Soleimani was banned from travelling outside of Iran by the Security Council in 2007. That ban was reaffirmed in 2015 with the adoption of resolution 2231 (2015). Despite that unambiguous travel ban, Soleimani has practically taken up residence in Iraq since the May elections. That fact was noted by the Secretary-General in his most recent report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) (S/2018/602). And let us be clear about what Soleimani is up to in Iraq. He is not there to help create a Government in Baghdad that is responsive to the Iraqi people. He is there to build an Iraqi Government that is under the control of the Iranian regime.

Iran treats Iraq as if it were not an independent nation. Iran sees Iraq as merely a transit point for Iranian weapons and a training ground for Iranian proxies. Iran seeks to keep Iraq economically weak and dependent on its exports, even though Iraq has plenty of its own resources. Why? Because Iran wants to use a weak Iraq to illicitly fund its terrorist activities.

There is one more recent Iranian escalation that bears special consequence to Americans. Two weeks ago, two Iranian proxy groups launched rocket attacks on the American Embassy in Baghdad and the United States Consulate in Basra. Using proxy forces in Iraq does not give the Iranian regime plausible deniability when attacks like this occur. The Trump Administration does not and will not buy that. Iran could have stopped its proxies' attacks. It chose not to, so the White House responded by putting Tehran firmly on notice: We hold the Iranian regime fully accountable for its proxies' attacks on United States facilities and personnel in Iraq, and we will not hesitate to vigorously defend American lives.

The sovereignty of Member States is an issue that comes up a lot in the Security Council — for good reason. Every nation has the sovereign right to govern itself, protect its people and defend its borders. No less than any nation, Iraq has that right. And yet, at a critical time in its history, as Iraqis build their Government, Iran is acting in shameless disregard of Iraqi sovereignty. It is threatening populations to promote its own political leaders. It is undermining a key feature of sovereignty — a State monopoly on the use of force — by promoting its own militias.

The United States is committed to working with Iraq to help it create an inclusive and independent Government. Iraq is working to recover from years of conflict against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, and still to overcome the legacy of Saddam Hussein's tyranny. Not only is Iranian interference preventing forward progress for the Iraqi people; it is pulling them backward to the conflict and division they are striving to put behind them. That is the very same conflict and division that Iran promotes in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon and across the Middle East. All members of the Security Council that respect the principle of national sovereignty should be concerned, and all that respect the right to self-determination of the Iraqi people should come to their defence.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8359

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8359th meeting
Friday, 21 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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18-29445 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to the statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2018/18.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8360

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8360th meeting
Friday, 21 September 2018, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

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18-29451 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/853, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2436 (2018).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

One of the themes of the United States Security Council presidency is transparency. The focus on outreach, inclusion and speaking the hard truths was also the approach we brought to the development of resolution 2436 (2018). If we were ambitious in our goals for the resolution, it is because defenceless people in some of the most dangerous places on Earth are counting on us. That is hard work. It demands high standards. We cannot be afraid to ask for and expect the very best of our peacekeepers. Therefore, resolution 2436 (2018) mandates a timely and transparent reporting process for performance failures. It creates real accountability measures for when those failures occur and applies objective criteria — data, not politics — to match the right police and troops with the right peacekeeping roles.

Our team rejected business as usual for this resolution. We focused on engaging major troop- and police-contributing countries that are not on the Security Council but are at the forefront of United Nations peacekeeping.

For our non-Council friends who helped shaped this draft — which is their resolution too — their experiences, ideas and even criticisms are reflected throughout the text. We are proud of this transparent and inclusive approach, not for its own sake but because it produced a strong final draft. The Secretary-General has challenged all of us to step up and strengthen peacekeeping, and today the Security Council responded to the call. The United States is grateful for the Council's leadership. The actions we take today will make the United Nations a better, more effective instrument of peace and security and a more trusted caretaker of the people we are pledged to protect.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We welcome today's unanimous adoption of a landmark resolution on performance in peacekeeping (resolution 2436 (2018)). As the penholder, the United States deserves our appreciation for all its efforts in facilitating the negotiations on the draft text. We know that it was not an easy process, but in the end we are very pleased that we managed to achieve the necessary consensus. We want to commend the flexibility that all the delegations concerned have shown and that made it possible for this important resolution to be adopted unanimously. It will undoubtedly define future discussions on peacekeeping, particularly at a time when efforts are geared to enhancing its overall efficiency and effectiveness.

It is no secret that, as a major troop-contributing country (TCC), we had our concerns, and we participated actively in the negotiations in order to make sure that those concerns were adequately addressed in the text, working closely with other troop- and police-contributing countries (PCCs) and reflecting their interests and concerns in the negotiation process. As a result, the resolution recognizes that realistic mandates, adequately resourced missions, capable and well-equipped personnel and strong leadership at all levels are essential to peacekeeping performance. It also urges the uniformed and civilian components of missions, as well as the Secretariat staff supporting peacekeeping operations, to meet

performance standards. It ensures that missions have capable and accountable leadership by underscoring the importance of improving the transparency of a selection process based on merit and competence, with due regard for the consideration of recruitment on a wide geographical basis.

The resolution determines that special investigations should be initiated whenever instances of significant failure in performance are alleged, while also underlining the importance of improving the methodology and transparency of such investigations, including through engagement with TCCs and PCCs. It requests that special investigation reports include all factors that lead to performance failure and emphasizes that their findings should inform the design of operation mandates, while stressing that performance failure by a few should not tarnish the achievements of many. It therefore contains a fair balance of references to indicators of both performance failure and excellence, accountability measures for performance failure and recognition and incentives for outstandingly high performance. It also indicates that decisions on accountability measures and on recognition and incentives must be based on objective facts and data, thereby ruling out any chance of the decision-making process being influenced by political considerations.

Finally, we want to recognize what the United States has done by reaching out informally to TCCs and PCCs and consulting extensively with them. We also appreciate the efforts made to accommodate most, if not all, of their concerns, thereby enabling us to strike the right balance in trying to achieve the necessary consensus. That is an exemplary practice that should become part of future negotiations on peacekeeping.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russia*): The work on the draft text for resolution 2436 (2018) proposed by our American partners was not easy. At one point, frankly, we were on the verge of radical decisions and a situation that would have deprived the Council of unity on an issue of major importance requiring a collective decision. We are pleased that patient efforts ultimately enabled us to include language that had Council members' unanimous suppo.t. This was made possible thanks to the authors' willingness not merely to hear but also to listen to the expectations and concerns of a broad range of States, particularly troop-contributing countries, that play a key role in United Nations peacekeeping. The Russian Federation therefore found it possible to support the resolution's adoption. The consultations on the text confirmed that where there is a will the Council is capable of finding a way to take decisions on issues, however complex, and we would be happy and ready to help to ensure that this constructive practice can be translated to other items on our agenda.

Issues related to optimizing peacekeeping missions' activities are extremely important and require the closest possible attention of all participants in peacekeeping operations. We fully support the desire of all to strengthen Blue Helmets' safety and make their work of implementing Council mandates more effective, but while the diagnosis is generally the same, the proposals as to which methods should be applied frequently differ. For example, we think that simplistic solutions, such as continually strengthening missions' mandates, cannot guarantee sustained solutions. However, these differences are not insuperable, and the work done on the resolution we adopted today shows that we definitely can and should seek common approaches that enable us to achieve the broadest possible consensus. For that reason, we believe that so-called general peacekeeping issues should be considered by the widest possible range of stakeholders, or our efforts will not be very effective. The General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations — which brings together the members of the Council, troop-contributing countries and host States, as well as ensuring close cooperation with the Secretariat — was established and operationalized in order to engage the largest possible number of States in this process for that purpose.

We would like to point out that the logic of collective effort is central the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The principal parties implementing Council mandates, the troop-contributing countries, should therefore, like host States, not be left on the sidelines when key decisions are made about the parameters for peacekeeping operations. We believe that if collective, consensus-based approaches prevail, as happened today, we can resolve United Nations peacekeeping problems, however difficult they are, thereby achieving the goals we all share and preserving and strengthening the authority and role of the United Nations in conflict resolution.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Today the Security Council is sending a strong and clear message in support of wider efforts to improve and strengthen United Nations peacekeeping. Last week's debate on peacekeeping (see S/PV.8349) provided

ample evidence for the timely nature and necessity of resolution 2436 (2018). We all know that peacekeeping faces serious challenges, that many United Nations missions are operating in complex and dangerous environments and that the high number of casualties under peacekeepers is worrisome. At the same time, improving performance demands our continuous attention in the broader context of peacekeeping reform. Today's resolution is an important step towards promoting better support for Blue Helmets and ensuring effective protection for civilians. I would like to highlight three important aspects of the resolution.

Innovative force-generation is a way to improve the performance of operations. Moreover, this resolution pleads for well trained and equipped personnel with the right capabilities to implement the tasks mandated by the Security Council. It includes accountability for underperformance and acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. That includes a wide range of measures that could be taken, including repatriation, and, most important, it requires a culture change in missions. At the same time, excellence should be rewarded. In that regard, we welcome reporting on outstanding performance. We must continue to learn from lessons, positive and negative. It is a positive sign that the Council managed to agree on this resolution unanimously, since peacekeeping is the Council's main and most visible instrument when it comes to conflict management. Today we managed to take another significant step towards making peacekeeping fit for purpose.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): United Nations peacekeeping plays an important role in maintaining international peace and security. China supports efforts aimed at improving the performance of United Nations peacekeeping operations, enhancing mandate-delivery capabilities and strengthening safety for peacekeepers. China therefore voted in favour of resolution 2436 (2018), just adopted by the Security Council. China would like to highlight the following points.

First, improving peacekeeping performance is an important aspect of efforts aimed at strengthening United Nations peacekeeping, which requires joint efforts on the part of the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and peacekeeping missions. The Secretariat and the civilian component of missions, needs to provide more efficient and high-quality support to ensure peacekeeping forces are able to deliver on their mandates. Due regard should be given to the real needs of TCCs, especially those from the developing world, in order to support their capacity-building in peacekeeping.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and adhere to the basic principles of peacekeeping, namely, the consent of the parties concerned, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. Peacekeeping operations should focus on the central tasks of maintaining peace in order to create conditions for the political settlement of conflict. Peacekeeping operations should respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned, heed their views and assist in their capacity-building efforts.

Thirdly, in devising a peacekeeping mandate, the Council should take into consideration the full spectrum of factors, including the realities and needs of the countries concerned, and the capacities and conditions of peacekeeping missions so as to ensure the mandate is clear, realistic and achievable, while allowing for timely adjustments to the priorities and key tasks at each stage in response to local dynamics. It is important to fully use the strength and role of regional organizations, such as the African Union, and to strengthen information exchange and policy dialogue with a view to forging synergies with United Nations peacekeeping.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8361

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8361st meeting

Friday, 21 September 2018, 3.25 p.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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18-29457 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: The Security Council has asked me to update it today on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. In a word, it is bleak. We are losing the fight against famine. The situation has deteriorated in an alarming way in recent weeks. We may now be approaching a tipping point, beyond which it will be impossible to prevent massive loss of life as a result of widespread famine across the country.

As the Council knows, Yemen has for some time now been the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Years of very intense and protracted fighting all over the country have destroyed infrastructure, wrecked public services, displaced millions of people from their homes and livelihoods, and have led to what is believed to be the worst cholera outbreak the world has ever seen ravage the country. All that, together with a dramatic economic collapse in a country already among the world's poorest meant that, at the beginning of this year, fully three quarters of Yemenis — 75 per cent, that is, 22 million people — were in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance or protection.

Many millions no longer have any regular source of income, including the families of teachers, health workers, water and sanitation workers and other public servants who have not been paid a regular salary in two years. Approximately 18 million people, including a high proportion of Yemen's children, are food insecure, and more than 8 million of them are severely food insecure, meaning they do not know where their next meal will come from. They need emergency food assistance to survive.

Notwithstanding all that, the humanitarian situation has been kept stable and the worst loss of life avoided so far this year. That is because the world's worst crisis has attracted the world's largest and one of the world's most effective humanitarian relief efforts. In the first half of the year, humanitarian organizations supported under the United Nations response plan provided assistance to more than 8 million of the most vulnerable Yemenis. The operation has been substantially scaled up and broadened since last year. While food distribution reached 3 million people a month last year, it has been dramatically expanded: we aim to reach 8 million people this month. A third wave of the cholera outbreak has been kept at bay with intensified prevention campaigns, repairing and chlorinating water networks and vaccinating people in high-risk districts in Aden, Al-Hudaydah and Ibb. Health facilities that would have otherwise closed have remained open through an incentive programme paid to health-care workers to keep services going.

Running such a large-scale relief effort requires an enormous operation on the ground. I want to pay tribute to all the aid workers — thousands of them from United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and others — as well as to the Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations and countless international, and especially national, civil society organizations. Most of the aid workers are Yemenis helping other Yemenis, often at considerable personal risk.

The relief effort would also be impossible without the generous funding voluntarily provided by our donors. I want to again thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Kuwait, the United States and many European countries, which together have committed about $2.6 billion, including $2 billion through the 2018 Yemen humanitarian response plan, to finance the operation.

I also want to note that the aid operation would not be possible, given the intensity of the conflict, without the deconfliction system run by the coalition authorities. We notify the Evacuation and Humanitarian Operation Cell in Riyadh of the operations of the aid agencies, and that protects aid workers, to a large degree, from being caught up in the fighting and helps the coalition to meet its obligations under international humanitarian law.

But the issue I want to flag to the Council today is that two recent developments threaten to overwhelm the aid operation.

First, there is a marked economic deterioration, symptomized by the depreciation of the Yemeni rial by some 30 per cent in the last month or so. Because almost all the food consumed in Yemen is imported, that depreciation translates directly into a sharp increase in the price of food for approximately 10 million Yemenis who are food insecure but are not reached by the aid operation. We are already seeing pockets of famine-like conditions, including cases where people are eating leaves because they have no other form of sustenance. We estimate that an additional 3.5 million people may soon be added to the 8 million already severely food insecure.

Compounding that, the depreciation of the rial and access problems are producing unprecedented increases in the price of fuel. My team on the ground reported yesterday that people are waiting in kilometre-long queues at petrol stations. As petrol prices have doubled just this week, transportation costs have gone up and reaching a health facility or fleeing fighting when it reaches one's neighbourhood is becoming unaffordable for many families without outside help.

Commercial imports of food and fuel have yet to recover from last November's blockade. Fuel imports in September are only one third of what they were in August. Commercial food imports dropped from a registered 410,000 metric tons in May to 280,000 metric tons in August. That is a decrease of 30 per cent. With the confidence of shipping companies already very battered, as reflected in a 35 per cent drop in clearance requests since the blockade, any further shocks could add to the core humanitarian caseload in a way that would simply overwhelm the capacity of humanitarian organizations.

Secondly, the intensification of fighting in recent weeks around Al-Hudaydah is choking the lifeline that the aid operation and commercial markets rely on. The combination of the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, where most of Yemen's food imports arrive, the access roads from the ports to the large population centres in the north and the west of the country and the facilities in the city in which imported grain is milled before onwards transportation is the essential, irreplaceable infrastructure on which aid operations and commercial imports rely.

The main Al-Hudaydah-Sana'a road, which is the principal artery used by commercial importers and humanitarian organizations to move commodities from the ports to people across the country, has been cut off in recent days due to fighting. Other routes are heavily damaged and transport times have increased, and therefore the cost has risen for humanitarian organizations and private companies.

The Red Sea Mills in Al-Hudaydah, which currently holds 45,000 tons of grain imported by the World Food Programme — enough to feed 3.5 million people for a month — has recently been inaccessible because of fighting in the local area. Armed groups have occupied humanitarian facilities. Attacks against civilians and humanitarian sites have resulted in dozens of deaths, especially of children, and serious damage has been caused to public health and water facilities and other humanitarian assets.

Aid agencies, including the United Nations, still have 600 staff in Al-Hudaydah. While we have, since June, provided direct assistance to over half a million people fleeing the fighting in the governorate, aid activities, including life-saving immunization campaigns, have been delayed or prevented.

It is far from clear that the recent intensification of fighting is producing any winners. It is, though, all too abundantly clear who the losers are — millions of Yemeni civilians, most of them women and children, whose lives are now right on the line. I know that some people will want to talk about who is to blame for the position we now face. That is, with respect, the wrong question for today. The issue for today is who can do something to head off the impending catastrophe. While we will continue to push to scale up the humanitarian response, humanitarian organizations simply cannot look after the needs of all 29 million Yemenis. That is untenable. We ask the Security Council for support in three key areas to prevent a complete collapse and to safeguard the lives of millions of the most vulnerable people.

First, immediate measures are needed to stabilize the economy and support the exchange rate. That includes usable liquidity for the Central Bank and the implementation of long-standing commitments to pay key public-sector salaries across the whole country, so that more people have the wherewithal to buy food and keep alive the commercial markets, which, as I have said, aid agencies cannot replace. It is, at the

same time, essential to avoid any policy measures that would damage the already paper-thin confidence of commercial importers any further.

Secondly, everyone with a stake in this must uphold their obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and facilitate access to vulnerable people. We have to keep all ports and main roads open, functional and safe. No humanitarian site should be used for military purposes. As I have said to members of the Council, the lifeline through which the aid operation runs now hangs by a thread.

Thirdly, we ask all parties to find practical solutions to key issues, including the opening of an air bridge for civilians to seek medical treatment outside Yemen for diseases that are no longer treatable inside the country. That would pave the way for the opening of the airport in Sana'a.

Finally, the parties need to come to the negotiating table and engage seriously with the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on a positive path towards peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for scheduling this important briefing today. I thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock. To pick up on one of his points, I also want to thank him for everything that his workers are doing on the ground, as well as all the other relevant United Nations agencies. I was very struck by what he said with regard to the large-scale nature of the relief effort, as well as by the fact that Yemenis are helping Yemenis. I believe that is important.

It was a very sobering briefing, following the others that we have heard before. I was struck by his phrases concerning lives on the line, how close we are to famine and that we might even be losing the fight. That is obviously extremely serious news. It is grave distress inflicted upon the people of Yemen. We are following the escalation of military fighting around Al-Hudaydah very closely. I wanted to pick up on Mr. Lowcock's statement and highlight just four areas.

First, to reiterate once again — I think that everyone on the Security Council has done this, but it bears repeating — all parties to the conflict must do everything possible to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and demonstrate in practical terms their commitment to upholding international humanitarian law. I was extremely concerned to hear about armed groups' presence in humanitarian facilities. I believe that the Council should demand that they leave. Those facilities need to be maintained for the protection of civilians. All parties have responsibilities under international humanitarian law, and the Council looks to them to discharge those responsibilities fully.

The second point concerns the flow of food, fuel and medical supplies into and throughout Yemen. It is critical that all parties facilitate that and that they work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Mr. Lowcock's partners on the ground. It is also important that civilians can move freely and safely so that those who can travel can get out of harm's way as necessary. We have been deeply concerned about reports that military action is making the Al-Hudaydah-Al-Hajjarah road unsafe. That will hamper the flow of supplies from Al-Hudaydah to northern Yemen. It is vital that onward supply routes remain operational. I should like to echo what Mr. Lowcock said: that cannot be done through humanitarian assistance alone. We absolutely need the commercial routes and supplies to be open and flowing. That therefore means that the Al-Hudaydah and Saleef ports need to remain open and that the mills and the food storage facilities need to be protected so that the food supply is safe.

I also wanted to join the Under-Secretary-General in his remarks about urgent action on stabilizing the economy. Since as recently as late July, the Yemeni rial has depreciated more than 20 per cent. That has halved the buying power of the people for food and other staples in comparison with one year ago. That is obviously increasing the vulnerability of families even to meet basic needs. Humanitarian Aid, as we heard, is overstretched, and even that is not enough because there are 29 million Yemenis liable to need our help. We therefore need to collectively think further about how best the Council can help stabilize the humanitarian situation by helping stabilize the economic situation, or by dealing with the relevant United Nations and other agencies and countries that can help in order to do that. I would like to call on all sides to cooperate even more intensely with OCHA and the United Nations agencies on the ground to try and help steady the situation.

I should like to conclude on the same point on which Mr. Lowcock ended by just reiterating the vital and overriding importance of the political situation. I will not recall the reasons for which the Geneva talks did not take the steps that we wanted them to take. I do not want to go into detail because I do not want to complicate the work of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, who is now trying to reconvene political talks. I am sure that our ministers who will be here next week for the General Assembly will want to have many discussions about Yemen on the margins of the high-level week. I believe that that will be important. Lastly, I call on all sides once again to get behind the process that the Special Envoy is leading and urge them all to find the flexibility that it will require for the sake of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his briefing to the Security Council on the latest developments concerning the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

I will focus on two points in my statement: first, the developments of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and, secondly, the political and security developments.

With regard to the developments of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, we just heard Mr. Lowcock's briefing in which he provided troubling numbers and statistics that demonstrate the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, especially in Al-Hudaydah. That situation unfortunately reached unprecedented levels of daily suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people, which has been exacerbated by the activities of the Houthi groups who exploit routes used for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Those groups set up intensive military checkpoints clearly intended hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need of it — people who are suffering cruelly from the possibility of famine and ongoing epidemics.

In order to ensure humanitarian access, the Yemeni Government forces, backed up by the alliance to restore legitimacy, conducted targeted operations that temporarily closed the main road between Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah; communicated through the Al-Riyadh Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Committee with the active international humanitarian organizations in order to inform them about alternative routes available for the delivery of humanitarian assistance from Al-Hudaydah to Sana'a; and confirmed that the road would be reopened as soon as possible after ensuring that it is de-mined and that checkpoints are lifted, which have hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance and undermined international efforts aimed at easing humanitarian suffering. The latest of such efforts include the donor conference held in April in Geneva on the situation in Yemen.

Concerning political and security developments, today's meeting is taking place to discuss the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is the outcome of the stalemate in political efforts to end the crisis, owing to the Houthis' absence during the 6 September round of consultations, which were fully supported by the Security Council.

The pro-legitimacy coalition has stepped in at various stages of the crisis to support and facilitate a political solution in Yemen based on resolutions of the international legitimacy. The latest of the coalition's actions include ceasing military operations in Al-Hudaydah, supporting United Nations efforts led by Mr. Martin Griffiths, and providing sufficient time to resume the dialogue among Yemeni parties, despite security challenges posed by the Houthis, as they continue their practices that constitute a threat to regional peace and security, through controlling Al-Hudaydah port and threatening the safety of international maritime navigation.

Those threats were confirmed by the letter addressed on 17 September to the President of the Security Council from the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), regarding sanctions on Yemen. The letter underscored the conclusions of the Committee's Panel of Experts, reaffirming the direct responsibility of the Houthis for the attack on the oil tanker *Abqaiq* and another commercial ship transporting wheat, while noting that if the attack on the oil tanker had been successful, it would have caused an environmental disaster with wide negative impact on the transport of merchandise from and into Yemen. That letter also reaffirmed that those attacks are a violation of international humanitarian law and would have a negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Given this unprecedentedly terrible humanitarian situation, the Security Council must send a message to the Yemeni parties, and especially the Houthis, that emphasizes the following points.

First, attempts to consolidate gains and strengthen personal interests rather than those of the Yemeni people

by ignoring Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015), and by continuing to refuse to participate positively in the political process, are unacceptable. Secondly, ballistic-missile attacks on neighbouring States and threats to maritime commercial routes in Bab Al-Mandab and the Red Sea are also unacceptable. Thirdly, it is equally unacceptable to use civilians as human shields, utilize civilian facilities and maritime ports as bases for launching military attacks or recruit children for military purposes, all of which are considered war crimes punishable under international law. Fourthly, it is vital to cooperate with the United Nations to ensure the safe delivery and full distribution of humanitarian assistance in every region of Yemen and without targeting United Nations field personnel.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for Mr. Griffiths, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and the importance of stepping up efforts to end the crisis in Yemen based on a political solution that complies with the three political terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions — in order to ensure Yemen's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for having taken this initiative and the United States delegation for convening today's important meeting so promptly. We are grateful to Mr. Lowcock for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which we found extremely alarming.

We have a long history of friendship with the people of Yemen, and we deeply and sincerely sympathize with them. While we note the courageous efforts of the humanitarian workers there, we realize that the only possible solutions to the problem are political ones. Like our other colleagues on the Council, we are worried about the escalation of violence in Yemen and have expressed our position on the issue many times. De-escalating the situation around Al-Hudaydah and halting offensive operations should help Special Envoy Griffiths succeed in his efforts. We call for restraint and for refraining from relying on force. We do not believe that one of the parties can extract greater flexibility from the other through violent pressure. The history of the conflict in Yemen shows that that approach does not work.

Mr. Lowcock quite rightly said just now that the only losers in this conflict will be the people of Yemen, who have endured unprecedented suffering and terrible experiences, including a cholera epidemic — in the twenty-first century. We must now all band together to support the efforts of Special Envoy Griffiths, whom we see as an objective and impartial mediator who has held fruitful talks with the Yemeni Government's delegation in Geneva. Productive contact was also made recently with representatives of Ansar Allah in Sana'a and Muscat. We are certain that a way can still be found to reach agreements, particularly on establishing confidence-building measures. There is a real chance of making progress on issues regarding the exchange of prisoners, opening the Sana'a airport, establishing international control at the port of Al-Hudaydah and paying Government workers' salaries throughout Yemen.

We call on all the parties to the conflict in Yemen to actively join Mr. Griffith's mediation efforts. Unilateral acts such as the missile strikes on Saudi Arabian territory, which we condemn, cannot produce effective, long-term results and can ultimately only widen the gulf of misunderstanding and mistrust between the opposing sides and undermine the prospects for restoring peace. For our part, we will continue to support the Special Envoy's efforts through our contacts with all the parties to the conflict in Yemen, and we urge our colleagues to give him active assistance. We support a halt to the violence throughout Yemen, which will enable the country to focus on the political process and on the urgent task of rebuilding its ruined infrastructure immediately. Its economy lies in ruins, and any delay threatens to make the country's already dire situation unredeemable. Russia will continue its humanitarian assistance to the people of Yemen in both the north and south.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that finding solutions to the conflict in Yemen would contribute significantly to stabilizing the situation throughout the subregion. We want to remind the Council of our proposal for launching a process for drafting a package of security- and confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf, and ultimately throughout the Middle East. Establishing this kind of architecture, which all the key countries in the region, including the Gulf States and Iran, should participate in, would not only help to strengthen comprehensive and indivisible security in that part of the world but also to resolve both

long-standing and new crises, including the Yemeni conflict. Threats and confrontation must give way to dialogue and cooperation, and cooperation on that basis can enable us to settle the conflict quickly.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his very informative, though alarming, briefing. I would also like to pay tribute to the humanitarian workers engaged in Yemen and to thank them for their devotion and commitment.

The Council's last meeting on the situation in Yemen (S/PV.8348) inspired cautious optimism. We discussed the resumption of consultations with the parties to the conflict and the prospects of bringing them to the negotiating table, and we were united in our message that the way forward is by finding a political solution to this conflict. While we still firmly believe this to be true, today, only 10 days later, we are meeting here again, and yet again we have to acknowledge the deteriorating situation on the ground in Yemen and confront the grim reality of its severe humanitarian crisis.

We are saddened to see the recent escalation of violence in Al-Hudaydah governorate and the armed clashes moving closer to Al-Hudaydah city every day. The number of civilian casualties has risen significantly since the beginning of September. As military action continues to intensify around the port and city of Al-Hudaydah, the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis is not simply imminent — it is already happening, and it is not going to stop unless the conflicting parties immediately renounce violence and commit to a cessation of hostilities. We must not forget that Al-Hudaydah is a crucial lifeline for millions and the main gateway for food and other supplies entering the country. What happens in and around it therefore has a major impact on the humanitarian situation in every other governorate of Yemen. We call on all stakeholders to work to ensure that all roads are accessible and all ports, including Al-Hudaydah, Ras Isa and Saleef, remain open and fully functional, so that humanitarian aid can be delivered to the millions of people who need it so desperately.

Unfortunately, we constantly face alarming reports of the targeting of civilian infrastructure in Yemen. Therefore, we strongly call on all the parties involved in the conflict to respect the most basic principles of international humanitarian law, such as those of distinction and proportionality, and to ensure the protection of civilians.

Let me reaffirm our strong support for the efforts of the Special Envoy aimed at relaunching an inclusive peace process. We firmly believe that there can be only a political solution to the conflict in Yemen. We call on the parties to the conflict to cease violence and refrain from taking actions that may lead to further suffering of civilians and that may push the whole country into a humanitarian disaster.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting, and Mr. Mark Lowcock for his enlightening, albeit dark, briefing.

Peru regrets and notes with deep concern the continuing conflict in Yemen, which has resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law. More than 11 million children are in extremely vulnerable situations. In accordance with the presidential statement on the protection of civilians (S/PRST/2018/18) that we just adopted, we express our rejection of the current escalation of violence in and around Al-Hudaydah, and we must continue to point out its grave consequences in terms of deaths, wounded, displaced persons, extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

We lament that the timely warnings issued by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies about the risks of escalation in Al-Hudaydah have not led to effective preventive diplomacy, notwithstanding the significant efforts made by Special Envoy Martin Griffith with the Security Council's support. It is clear that his task is very complex and that we must continue to support him.

We regret the absence of the Houthis and the difficulties in making progress in Geneva. Nonetheless, under no circumstances can that be interpreted as justification for insisting on a non-existent military solution to the conflict. On the contrary, we must step up efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

In that connection, we note that the promises of a supposedly limited impact of an escalation of hostilities in Al-Hudaydah are not credible. We must remember that a defining feature of the conflict has been the committing of atrocious crimes with impunity by all

parties and with a clear disdain for their consequences on the civilian population.

There are 22 million Yemenis living under precarious conditions. The economic paralysis generated by the conflict has hit them hard. Basic services have become inaccessible. As has been pointed out, civil servants, including teachers and medical personnel, are no longer being paid. Hyperinflation and devaluation are affecting the poorest.

In that context, Peru considers it indispensable and urgent that all the parties involved in the conflict, and especially those with the capacity to influence them, including the Council, take action to achieve a lasting ceasefire and bring the conflict back to the negotiating table.

We stress the real possibilities of achieving an inclusive political solution, which the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has been promoting, and we stress the need to move forward in the process with confidence-building measures among the parties.

For now, we stress the need to ensure the safety, openness and full functioning of the ports, especially that of Al-Hudaydah, as well as the city's highways and other access routes to the city, to provide essential goods.

We would also like to express our admiration and support for the humanitarian workers deployed in the country, who are carrying out their work under very risky conditions, and we underscore the need to ensure their safe and unrestricted access to the population.

Lastly, we cannot accept double standards. It is imperative that the Council remain united and be consistent with regard to its responsibility to protect civilians in all humanitarian crises, wherever they occur, in line with international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank Mr. Mark Lowcock for his sobering update today. He and all humanitarians working tirelessly to alleviate suffering and save lives have our full and wholehearted support. He should be congratulated on an ambitious and effective relief effort under what we understand to be overwhelming circumstances.

The briefing today demonstrates the desperate urgency of the humanitarian situation. The people of Yemen are already suffering from the world's largest humanitarian disaster, and with the recent deteriorating security environment, the situation is getting worse by the day. Civilian causalities are increasing, medical facilities are no longer functioning, disease is spreading, hunger is growing and the humanitarian space to reach those in need is again shrinking.

The recent fighting on the main road between Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a is now an urgent concern. The disruption of that critical supply chain would have disastrous humanitarian consequences. Hundreds of thousands of people are at risk in Al-Hudaydah and millions more in other governorates, if Al-Hudaydah is cut off from the northern parts of the country. An additional 1 million children in Yemen are now at risk of descending into famine, bringing the total number of children at risk to 5.2 million, as we have heard.

In the face of such a dramatic humanitarian situation, the demands from the Security Council, as agreed in the presidential statement adopted in March (S/PRST/2018/5), needs to be repeated loud and clear. First, steps need to be taken towards an urgent cessation of hostilities in order to promote the political process and, above all, protect the civilian population. Secondly, safe and unhindered humanitarian access needs to be ensured, including the full functioning of key ports and roads. Humanitarian personnel must be allowed to carry out their mission to save lives across the whole country — unhindered and without risking their own safety. Thirdly, respect for international humanitarian law needs to be safeguarded, including the protection of civilians, and medical and humanitarian personnel. The three asks by Mr. Lowcock today — stabilize the economy, protect civilians and ensure medical assistance and evacuation — make perfect sense and should be heeded.

After years of bloody conflict, it is evident that there is no military solution to the crisis in Yemen. Intensified diplomatic efforts are instead urgently needed to find a peaceful solution. We commend the Government of Yemen for its constructive approach in those recent efforts, and we find it deeply regrettable that the Houthis did now show up in Geneva and have continued their military activities. But the temporary setback in Geneva cannot be an excuse for a return to violence. The recent escalation not only aggravates the humanitarian situation, it also undermines the prospects for a political process. All sides will lose.

We have again today been put on notice. It is unbearably frustrating that this year, 2018, we are hearing

about massive famine and cholera outbreaks — fully preventable things. We simply cannot sit idly by as the lives of millions of innocent civilians are at risk. The Security Council must remain actively engaged and step up its efforts in support of Special Envoy Martin Griffith and Mr. Lowcock. We must call in unison on all parties — and repeat that call and remind them — to engage in good faith in an inclusive United Nations-led political process without preconditions, but with dedication, energy and serious commitment. The high-level week, as the United Kingdom Ambassador said, coming up now should be used as an opportunity in that regard. The people of Yemen have already paid an unacceptably high price for this senseless war.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United Kingdom for taking the initiative to convene this crucial meeting, which is being held at a time when the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate under the circumstances that Mr. Lowcock just eloquently described in detail.

I will address three points. First, I will refer to the escalation of tensions in the governorate of Al-Hudaydah since the beginning of September, specifically in recent days, and the major humanitarian risks it poses. I will then recall the need to do everything possible to guarantee humanitarian access to Yemen and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Finally, I will come back to the imperative of a political solution, which must be sought immediately. It alone will bring about a lasting resolution of the crisis.

First, we have reiterated many times that every effort must be made to ensure that the ongoing military confrontation in the Al-Hudaydah region spares the civilian population, which has already been sorely tested and includes many displaced persons. The civilian infrastructure must also be protected and food and power supplies ensured. While the rising tensions could lead to new population displacements, civilians seeking to flee the fighting must be able to move freely and safely.

Furthermore, as Mr. Lowcock recalled, it is necessary to protect the umbilical cord that the port of Al-Hudaydah represents for Yemen. More than three quarters of the humanitarian aid and commercial freight entering the country transits through the port of Al-Hudaydah, which, like that of Saleef, should remain open and fully operational. It is a matter not only of supplying Al-Hudaydah and the region but also of meeting the needs of a hinterland that covers most of the country, including Sana'a, where the vast majority of Yemenis live. The roads between Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a must be kept open to allow for the delivery of food aid and to prevent the large-scale malnutrition already affecting Yemen from becoming an unprecedented famine. Today, owing to the fighting, some of the reserves stored in Al-Hudaydah are already completely inaccessible. It must be clearly said: the conduct of military operations must in no way hinder humanitarian access.

Finally — and this is my third point — the humanitarian personnel who today risk their lives working in extremely dangerous conditions must be protected. It is crucial that the humanitarian actors, upon whom the Yemeni population relies very heavily, can plan their operations in advance and with the guarantee of being protected from attacks.

Besides the situation in Al-Hudaydah, we must respond collectively to the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Members have without doubt seen the disturbing pictures of emaciated children that have circulated on social networks and that depict a troubling reality. Civilians are the first victims of war and the consequent shortages. It is therefore important to do everything possible to ensure their protection. France reiterates its call to ensure full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need.

In addition, the humanitarian response of the United Nations must make it possible to contain the widespread cholera epidemic raging in the country. The vaccination campaigns successfully launched in recent months must be allowed to continue. The humanitarian response must also make it possible to provide Yemeni children with a future, while malnutrition makes them very vulnerable. It is unacceptable that they starve. Moreover, we reiterate that, in all situations of war, everything must be done to protect children from conflict, as required by Security Council resolutions.

While the rial has fallen sharply, prices rise and food staples are scarce, the Security Council, and more broadly the entire international community, must support the efforts of the international financial institutions to find a solution to the economic crisis facing the country. France stands ready to act in that regard, building on the work of the humanitarian meeting on Yemen held in Paris on 27 June.

The collapse of the economy and the State structures has in fact caused more deaths than the hostilities themselves. Rebuilding the State structure in a war economy is a tragic impasse that must be overcome. That requires renewed efforts by all, as Mr. Lowcock told us. I state emphatically: the protection of civilians, free and unhindered access to humanitarian aid and the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel are not options; they are obligations under international law for all the parties to the conflict.

In that context, it is absolutely essential to safeguard every opportunity to renew dialogue and to build a genuine political process based on confidence-building measures between the parties. The meeting in Geneva on 6 September may have been a missed opportunity. However, that does not in any way mean the end of efforts to advance the political process and should not lead to increased tensions between the parties.

Let us remember that the military approach cannot bring about a solution in Yemen. The war has gone on for too long. We therefore call on all the parties to continue to engage with the Special Envoy so as to resume the path of dialogue as soon as possible and to advance the political process, which is the only viable way to put an end to the conflict in Yemen. United Nations mediation alone can relaunch negotiations with a view to an agreement on the management of the port of Al-Hudaydah, a resumption of talks, a lasting cessation of hostilities and the definition of the parameters of a political solution for a durable, comprehensive and inclusive agreement that restores peace in Yemen and security in the Arabian peninsula and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait.

Given the terrible humanitarian situation, which has continued to deteriorate, France will remain fully mobilized, particularly within the Council, to work for concrete solutions that facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the political resolution of the conflict. That is the only way to end the suffering of the Yemeni population.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for having requested the convening of this meeting. We would also like to thank you, Madam President, for having granted that request. We would also like to extend our thanks to Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his detailed and informative briefing.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is deeply troubled by the ongoing hostilities in Yemen and the harm that they have caused to the population and to the country's infrastructure since the war began at the end of the first quarter of 2015. It is unfortunate that, to date, the city of Al-Hudaydah and its surroundings, through which almost 70 per cent of the imports of food, fuel and other essential supplies for the whole country enter, continue to be the scene of fighting. To ease the humanitarian crisis in the country, it is a priority to achieve the security of that town so as to ensure the full operation of its strategic port.

The vulnerability of the population continues to be grounds for great concern, with 22.2 million people needing some kind of humanitarian assistance or protection. An estimated 17.8 million people lack food security, 16 million lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation and another 16.4 million lack access to adequate health care according to a report prepared by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Added to that is the worrisome general economic situation facing the country, as described by Mr. Lowcock.

The human cost and the humanitarian impact of the conflict are unjustifiable. My delegation condemns the indiscriminate attacks that have recently taken place in public areas, where the United Nations country team documented and confirmed the deaths of 21 minors — 13 boys and 8 girls — and the mutilation of 82 minors — 51 boys and 31 girls — as well as four attacks on schools and an attack on a hospital.

Since 12 September, armed clashes on the main road between Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a have impeded the delivery of 45,000 metric tons of grain that the Red Sea Mills could process to feed more than 3 million people for a month. We appeal to the parties for an immediate cessation of hostilities in order to facilitate the delivery of that humanitarian assistance to the population.

Cholera is another problem that afflicts the Yemeni population. We regret the announcement on Monday of the death of nine people, including seven children. We are concerned about the condition of the thousands of cases recorded in the country, bearing in mind that more than 2,000 people have died of the disease since April of last year. However, we commend the efforts of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All programme and other resources to control the outbreak.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea encourages all the parties to the conflict to support the efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths, who, since the meeting in Geneva on 6 September, when he had an opportunity to talk with the Government delegation, continues to set up more separate meetings with the other groups in order to find confidence-building measures to ensure future negotiations between the warring parties, at which we hope all the parties will be present without preconditions.

Finally, we acknowledge and support the efforts made by the United Nations, and by the Council in particular, to encourage the Yemeni parties to the conflict to work together to end it. In that regard, I call upon the international community, countries with influence on the area and the Council to continue to support the Yemeni people, who deserve a life of dignity, to emerge from a war that has plunged the country into a grave humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins in the gratitude expressed by several of our colleagues to the delegation of the United Kingdom for requesting today's meeting. We also thank you, Madam President, for putting this item on the agenda. And we thank Mr. Mark Lowcock for his briefing. We listened attentively to the details of the horrific effects of the war.

My delegation is deeply concern about the increasing level of violence in Yemen, and in particular about the stepped up bombing and air strikes resulting from the military campaigns in the area surrounding the city of Al-Hudaydah. Regrettably, such armed clashes have extended beyond the port and have affected the main road connecting the cities of Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a, making it practically impossible to use that route to transport goods and humanitarian assistance. In addition, as Mr. Lowcock explained, they have affected the Red Sea Mills silos.

Since the start of the conflict, the number of civilian victims who have died or have been seriously injured as a result of the clashes and attacks on civilian areas and infrastructure has risen to more than 16,000. That number could spike dangerously if the city of Al-Hudaydah and its more than 600,000 residents are trapped in the midst of a military campaign. Similarly, effects could then be felt throughout the country as ports that are vital to the survival of the Yemeni people are compromised or rendered useless by the military strife under way. We recall that more than 70 per cent of the imports that arrive in Yemen enter through the port of Al-Hudaydah. Therefore, an attack on the city or port would not only seriously affect the 22 million people who currently need humanitarian assistance in the country; the number of people who require urgent assistance would become unsustainable. It is also important to bear in mind that increased violence would also lead to the displacement of entire families fleeing the conflict and heading to the city of Al-Hudaydah for shelter. A clear example of that situation was recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. On 14 September, it reported that approximately 3,500 people had been displaced as a result of clashes in districts adjacent to Al-Hudaydah. Clearly, a military campaign in that city could cause a major disaster.

Those acts of war serve only to undermine and go against the efforts being carried out by the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to resume dialogue to bring the parties together in the quest for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Therefore, the Council must emphatically reiterate to the parties that compliance with its resolutions if obligarory, in particular resolution 2216 (2015). All actors and parties involved must therefore put an immediate end to the violence, abandon any precondition to establish dialogue and commit to starting a negotiation process for a political solution that meets the demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, while respecting the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. My delegation supports the process of consultations and dialogue launched by the Special Envoy, as an important initiative to foster a political negotiation process that would allow for a peaceful settlement to the situation in Yemen. We again call on the actors and parties involved to join and contribute constructively to the dialogue process.

It is also essential to remind the parties that attacks or military campaigns that target civilians, public spaces, housing or medical and educational facilities, as well as missile launches and the deployment of anti-personnel mines, are contrary to international law and international humanitarian law. Such actions could constitute war crimes and be investigated and punished by the relevant international courts.

Finally, with a view to achieving a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, my delegation reiterates its full support for the efforts at mediation and dialogue

initiated and being carried out by the Special Envoy vis-à-vis the parties.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): First, let me thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his sobering briefing today. I would also like to thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the entire international community for their ongoing efforts in Yemen to save lives on a daily basis, under increasingly difficult circumstances. We supported the urgent request for today's briefing because we have seen the situation in Yemen deteriorate rapidly this week. We appreciate the fact that you, Madam President, were able to accommodate the request for today's briefing at such short notice.

The images coming out of Yemen of starving children on hospital beds put the international community to shame. They compel us to speak out and take action. With the fighting again flaring up around Al-Hudaydah, an additional 1 million already severely food-insecure children in Yemen risk falling victim to famine. Behind those shocking numbers lies the harsh reality of the daily lives of innocent Yemenis in a man-made crisis waged at their expense. I will address three issues here today: first, the increase of access constraints around Al-Hudaydah; secondly, the effects of the economy on the humanitarian situation and, thirdly, the protection of civilians.

First, we are extremely concerned about the consequences of this week's clashes around Al-Hudaydah on the already strained humanitarian access to the millions of Yemenis in need. The main road to Sana'a can no longer be used. I am concerned to hear from Mr. Lowcock that alternative routes are heavily damaged. Access to the Red Sea Mills warehouse has been cut off and the port is under threat now more than ever before. The shutdown of Al-Hudaydah port operations or the disruption of its supply chain to the heavily populated areas behind it would be the tipping point for a full-blown famine. The Council recognized the need to break the vicious circle of armed conflict and food insecurity when it unanimously adopted resolution 2417 (2018), on the 24 May. Now we must take that text to heart and ensure that we prevent any further deterioration. I would like to thank Mr. Lowcock for putting three concrete asks on the table to address the situation. In that context, we also call on OCHA to keep the Council informed about the food security situation. The warring parties and their supporters have a responsibility to keep the port open and fully functional and to ensure that the desperately needed supplies reach Yemenis in need all throughout the country.

My second point concerns another major driver of the increasing food crisis: Yemen's failing economy. The recent devaluation of the Yemeni riyal to its lowest point in history has severely hit the purchasing power of the Yemeni population. That, together with rising food prices and the non-payment of public-sector salaries for more than two years, is proving to be a lethal combination for ordinary Yemenis, including in parts of the country that have been less affected by the fighting. Experts warn that economic collapse has the potential to kill even more Yemenis than the violence underlying it. The parties need to come together and address the issue with the utmost urgency.

Thirdly, we just adopted a presidential statement on the protection of civilians (S/PRST/2018/18) The words in that statement will be meaningless if we do not insist on their full implementation in the crises on the Council's agenda. All parties need to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and address its violations. Ending impunity should be a key ingredient in the solution to the conflict in Yemen. The political transition in Yemen in early 2012 was a positive example in the region in many ways, but if it has taught us anything it is that postponing justice only fosters further conflict and feeds the notion that transgressions do not have consequences.

In conclusion, the drivers of famine in Yemen are manifold. The immediate steps to be taken are clear. The parties need to respect international humanitarian law, keep the ports open, protect the supply roads and agree once and for all on the modalities for resuming salary payments. The one thing that can permanently end the suffering of the Yemeni population is a sustainable, peaceful political solution to the conflict. We call again on all parties to demonstrate their commitment to peace, to de-escalate — first and foremost around Al-Hudaydah — and to engage without preconditions with the Special Envoy. The children of Yemen deserve protection from violence, hunger and disease. They deserve a future.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I join others in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for his clear and comprehensive update. We convey our readiness to extend our support to his activities. We also express our deep appreciation

to him and the staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for working tirelessly in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. Kazakhstan is closely following recent developments and would like to make the following observations.

First, we voice our support for the repeated calls of the United Nations on all parties to save civilian lives, prevent deaths and injuries and allow for freedom of movement. We therefore note and welcome the coordinated efforts of the stakeholder arrangement — namely, the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Gulf countries — to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Yemen.

Kazakhstan salutes the selfless work of the humanitarian partners who have been providing food, water, emergency kits, cash and health care. We regret that two-thirds of the Yemeni population still require protection from malnutrition, cholera and other diseases, which have killed or afflicted thousands of civilians, especially after the very hot summer season. My delegation expresses hope that critical health infrastructure and water stations will be thoroughly protected to serve the local populations.

Secondly, we fully agree with Mr. Lowcock's call to boost commercial imports of food, fuel and humanitarian supplies through all of Yemen's ports. We also appeal for the mobilization of emergency services and adequate funding to relieve the population from famine. At the same time, it is critical to seek new and support all existing confidence-building measures in the humanitarian sphere.

Finally, Kazakhstan welcomes the decision of the coalition to keep open all Yemeni ports, including Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, to allow humanitarian and commercial cargo to enter without restriction. Maintaining the flow of imports is essential for humanitarian cases, especially in the light of the rise in unemployment, the non-payment of salaries to public sector employees for over two years and the devaluation of the Yemeni rial, as well as rocketing food and fuel prices.

We emphasize that all obligations under international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties, who must also take responsibility to mitigate the humanitarian situation by cooperating fully with the United Nations and the relevant humanitarian agencies.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire thanks the American presidency of the Council for organizing this briefing on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and the United Kingdom for taking the initiative to request this meeting.

We thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing on the latest developments in the situation in Yemen.

My delegation is concerned by the resumption of fighting since 18 September around Al-Hudaydah port following the failure of the peace talks in Geneva on 8 September. These clashes are likely to aggravate the humanitarian crisis, which is already considered by the United Nations as the worst in the world. All the more worrying is the fact that this takes place in an urban area with more than 600,000 inhabitants. Furthermore, the Al-Hudaydah port, which handles 70 per cent of the country's imports, is the main gateway for approximately 90 per cent of the humanitarian aid on which millions of Yemenis depend. As a result, the renewed fighting around that strategic port not only puts the delivery of humanitarian aid at risk, but has also led to soaring prices for basic necessities. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, food prices have risen by 68 per cent since 2015. Furthermore, there are also fuel shortages.

Concerned by the serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the warring parties to adhere to an immediate ceasefire to allow safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to populations in distress. We invite them to resume dialogue with a view to a political settlement of the current crisis and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire urges the parties to the conflict to take ownership of the peace plan proposed by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy to the Secretary-General on Yemen, and encourages him to continue his mediation and good offices for the resumption of intra-Yemeni dialogue.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Mr. Mark Lowcock for his briefing. I commend him and his team for their efforts to ease the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The conflict in Yemen, which has been going on for more than three years, has plunged the country

into an acute crisis. Today, as the conflict escalates in Al-Hudaydah and other places, disruption to humanitarian access is looming large, aggravating the risk of famine and cholera outbreaks, which is a dire consequence that no one — neither the Yemeni people, the countries of the region nor the international community — can endure. It is therefore incumbent on the international community to empower the parties in Yemen to set aside their differences in the spirit of reconciliation so as to avoid the spread of conflict. This must be done as a matter of urgency in order to prevent further aggravation of the humanitarian crisis in the country.

The international community should scale up humanitarian assistance and provide medicine, food and other supplies in accordance with needs on the ground in order to mitigate the suffering of the Yemeni people. We should urge the parties concerned in Yemen to take measures to tame price hikes and keep commercial goods moving. That would also go some way towards easing the crisis. The parties concerned should work together to improve humanitarian access so that assistance to the Yemeni people can be delivered unimpeded, safely and securely, paving the way for better humanitarian outcomes in the country.

There is no alternative to a political solution if Yemen is to have lasting peace and put an end to the humanitarian crisis once and for all. The Yemeni parties should return to the political track as soon as possible. Special Envoy Martin Griffiths has recently continued to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, pushing for the resumption of intra-Yemeni peace talks and the implementation of confidence-building measures.

It behoves the international community to support the United Nations and the Special Envoy in stepping up their good offices to establish a sustainable mechanism for dialogue and negotiation. China supports the preservation of Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. China also supports the Yemeni parties in arriving at that inclusive solution as soon as possible through dialogue and negotiations based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the outcome document of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference.

Alongside the international community, China stands ready to support the Special Envoy's efforts and will continue to play a constructive role towards a political solution to the Yemeni issue.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for requesting this meeting, and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his briefing. We also express our appreciation to the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for their selfless service in Yemen under extremely difficult circumstances.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains a source of great concern. Millions are on the brink of famine. In addition, the conflict in Al-Hudaydah governorate has escalated further as renewed fighting has moved closer to Al-Hudaydah city. With the situation deteriorating dramatically, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns that the recent escalation of fighting has left the lives of hundreds of thousands in an extremely dangerous situation.

We heard it loud and clear earlier from Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock that Yemen is facing the worst humanitarian crisis. Almost every day, millions struggle to survive and depend on humanitarian assistance to obtain basic needs and services. The devaluation of the Yemeni rial, rising food prices, non-payment of public salaries and a cholera outbreak have contributed to further worsening the humanitarian situation in the country. As has been repeatedly stated by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, Al-Hudaydah port is a lifeline for millions who depend on humanitarian assistance.

In that regard, we appeal to all parties to do everything possible so that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners can have safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to reach all Yemenis in need. We also stress the importance of protecting civilians and civilian facilities. In addition, for the sake and consideration of civilians who have suffered so much, we call on the parties to exercise restraint to avoid civilian casualties. The launching of missiles by the Houthis against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and attacks on commercial vessels are also counterproductive and unacceptable. We condemn such acts.

It is indeed heartbreaking to note that despite the continued efforts of the Special Envoy to revive the political talks, the fighting in Yemen is escalating, affecting civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. While urging all parties to cooperate with

the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, we underscore that the ultimate solution to end the unspeakable tragedy in Yemen is a comprehensive political dialogue that meets the legitimate aspirations of Yemenis and addresses the security concerns of regional actors. In that regard, we support the tireless diplomatic efforts of the Special Envoy, who has continued his shuttle diplomacy to bring all parties back to the negotiating table.

In conclusion, it is imperative for all parties to engage with the Special Envoy in good faith and constructively, without any preconditions. That is what the people of Yemen expect from all parties. We also believe that the Security Council and countries with influence should extend their backing to the endeavours of the Special Envoy as he continues to facilitate a political solution in accordance with relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015). Lasting peace in Yemen will be possible only through an inclusive political process facilitated by the United Nations.

The President: I will now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing. What we know about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is horrifying, but truthfully what is even scarier is what we do not know. Recently, journalists visited a remote village in northern Yemen. They found families wasting away, surviving — if you can call it that — on a diet of sour green paste made of leaves from a local plant. One mother of a seven-month-old was so malnourished that she often could not feed her baby, and she had no other means. She told the journalists, "Since the day she was born, I have not had the money to buy her milk or buy her medicine". The pictures of the village's starving babies captured by the journalists are almost too much to take. These kids were wasting away off the grid. Their parents cannot even afford the cost of transporting their kids to clinics for help.

Families in Yemen rely on outside aid to survive. Yet the needs are so vast and the obstacles so tough that it is hard to figure out who needs help and actually get it there. That is despite the best efforts of so many brave aid workers, who struggle to deal with officials on the ground blocking access and interfering with relief efforts. In the end, we may never know how many kids are dying in these remote villages. Parents rarely report their deaths and they never get counted in the already dire statistics of the United Nations.

Stories like those are overwhelming, but the Security Council is not helpless in the face of this crisis. There are things that the international community can do to help these starving children and their mothers. We just have to have the will to do them. The last time the Council met on Yemen (see S/PV.8348), we all urged the parties to de-escalate and go back to talks. But as we heard today, the opposite has happened. So the United States calls on all parties to take precautions to protect the grain mills and food storage facilities around Al-Hudaydah. Yemen cannot afford any more close calls with fighting around these warehouses. Fighters must not enter United Nations facilities, which must be protected from attack.

This is not rocket science. The minimum that the Security Council can demand of the fighters from all sides is to allow humanitarian relief to reach the starving people of Yemen. Recent fighting is making the main road from the port much harder to use and the parties should work with the United Nations to get aid moving around without interference. Finally, the parties must avoid moving ahead with any new restrictions on imports of foods, fuel and other lifesaving goods bound for Yemen. Those are things that the parties can do immediately.

In the longer term, everyone around the table today knows what must be done. All of us support the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to find ways to reduce the violence and return to talks. The tragedy that is building in Yemen is almost beyond comprehension, but we are not helpless in the face of it. Everyone — the Security Council, the warring parties in Yemen and their partners — should be focused on negotiating an end to this war, not making the suffering of Yemeni children worse.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Bin Mubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for giving us the opportunity to speak before the Council for the second time this month. We wish you and the delegation of the United States every success. We would also like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock and his team, along with all the humanitarian workers, for their

sincere and great efforts to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in my country.

Today, the Security Council is discussing the humanitarian situation in my country. While we greatly appreciate this international attention, the deteriorating humanitarian situation is neither incidental nor the result of a natural disaster. Its causes are clear, and those responsible for them are known to everyone. Dealing only with the results and the symptoms of the conflict without addressing its root causes is a dangerous way to address conflicts. It is bound to fail.

Four years ago, on 21 September 2014, the Houthi militias, backed by Iran, the world's State sponsor of terrorism, launched a coup against the State and the outcome of the national dialogue and against everything that the Yemenis had agreed to. His Excellency the President of the Republic, Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, said at the time that what Yemen was being subjected to was "a conspiracy that is dragging the country to civil war". He affirmed that he would spare no effort in discharging his constitutional responsibilities and would work to restore State authority.

Since that day, the Yemeni Government, under his leadership, has made every effort to put an end to the coup and regain State authority. It has made one concession after the other and extended its hand for peace based on the terms of reference, in support of the efforts of the United Nations and its Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths. The Yemeni Government has made it its goal to achieve the dream of its people to build a civil and modern federal State that supports democracy, human rights and freedom based on the rule of law and good governance. That is the only path that we wish to take.

Throughout the latest developments, the Council has agreed on a track to support peace, led by the United Nations and based on the three terms of reference that have been agreed that the local, regional and international levels, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). That is the only way to advance the peace process.

In every round of peace talks, the most recent of which took place in Geneva, we have hoped to reach a positive outcome on the humanitarian track, at least in terms of alleviating the suffering of our people in all the matters on the agenda. However, the coup forces intentionally absented themselves at the last minute, which indicated their lack of will to discuss any humanitarian measures, because that would cost them a card that they have always played internally and externally. The international community must be aware of that.

Speaking of the humanitarian situation, all of the cities that have been under the control of the coup forces since 2014 have witnessed systemic raids, the terrorization and humiliation of civilians, and the recruitment and deployment of innocent children to the battlefields of death, as well as the spread of black markets and the theft of our people's wealth in broad daylight. That is a dangerous development of which we have warned repeatedly.

The suffering of thousands of families in Al-Hudaydah and all areas under the control of the coup forces is due mainly to the imprisonment of family breadwinners; the loss of income through confiscation by the Houthis of over 70 per cent of the State's resources, according to United Nations reports; and the absence of humanitarian aid because it is being obstructed, stolen or diverted by the Houthi militias, as has been testified to by United Nations agencies. That issue is at the core of the conversation on confidence-building measures in Yemen that have been sponsored by the Council, with the support of the Special Envoy and the States that are sponsoring the political process in Yemen.

Al-Hudaydah governorate is now the main challenge to humanitarian aid because the Houthi militias are the only ones benefiting from the seaport, while the residents of the area are starving to death. That cannot persist much longer. The humanitarian suffering in Al-Hudaydah must end. We must not allow navigation in the Red Sea to be threatened. We must take action, while giving due protection and care to the civilians.

I do not exaggerate when I say that the humanitarian aid being given to Al-Hudaydah by the coalition States, foremost among which are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is unprecedented in any similar military operation in Yemen and the region. In that regard, I would like to specifically mention that such aid is being provided by the States of the coalition, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

My country and the coalition States have sent a letter to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian

Affairs explaining their concern over the safety of civilians and aid workers because the road between Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah lies close to fighting in areas where the Houthi militias have transformed the city of Al-Hudaydah into a military centre. They have set up numerous checkpoints that are hindering the movement and passage of civilians. They have also used the Red Sea mills, silos and warehouses for military purposes, as Mr. Lowcock mentioned earlier.

We have affirmed that the Yemeni Government and the coalition members understand that those roads are used by commercial and humanitarian trucks, and we are therefore actively working to secure them by removing the mines planted by the Houthi militias, which threaten civilians, aid workers and health-care providers. That is merely one of the precautionary measures that we are taking. The Evacuation and Humanitarian Operation Cell has made it clear to all stakeholders that there are many other alternative routes that connect Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a. The coalition of States sent a detailed letter today to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs concerning those roads and routes.

The Yemeni Government confirms its commitment to international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law, and calls for equal condemnation of all those who violate those laws. We also call for the intensification of efforts and coordination with the relevant official bodies, and for the establisment of major hubs for the United Nations agencies working in the humanitarian field in the temporary capital of Aden and other major Yemeni cities. The Yemeni Government and the Arab coalition have previously called for decentralized humanitarian work so as to avoid any complications arising from military operations. There are currently five humanitarian aid areas in Yemen, each of which has land and sea corridors to guarantee that aid reaches all the people of Yemen equally.

With regard to the depreciation of the Yemeni rial, the Government of Yemen has established a high-level economic committee that has adopted several measures to stop the currency deterioration, including creating favourable conditions for exporting oil and gas, and preventing the flight of hard currency, as well as stopping the import of luxury goods and increasing interest rates. In that regard, I would like to say to the United Nations, States and donor institutions that play a pivotal role in stabilizing the Yemeni currency if they were to channel their aid to Yemen through the Yemeni Central Bank, as is being done by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Today, 21 September, holds a bitter memory for our people, who call it the day of the catastrophe. However, what fills us with hope is that in a few days we will celebrate the anniversary of the 26 September revolution, when our people got rid of the racist rule of the imams that the rebellious militias are trying to revive in Yemen. Those are the laws of nature. The night ends and the sun always rises. Will our sun rise soon?

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.